Life in the heights; studies in the Epistles,
227.06 J834L 119315
Jowett, John Henry,
Life Pacific College Alumni Library

DATE DUE

227.06
J834L

Jowett, John Henry
Life in the heights

119315

LIFE Pacific College
Alumni Library
1100 West Covina Blvd.
San Dimas, CA 91773

Rev. J. H. JOWETT, C.H., D.D.

Springs in the Desert
Apostolic Optimism
The Eagle Life
The Friend on the Road
The Preacher: His Life and Work
Brooks by the Traveller's Way
Thirsting for the Springs
The Redeemed Family of God

LIFE IN THE HEIGHTS

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLES

BY

REV. J. H. JOWETT, C.H., D.D.

WITHDRAWAL

NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

MAY 16 '71
56236

COPYRIGHT, 1925,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

LIFE IN THE HEIGHTS
— B —
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

7.06
S34L

LIFE Pacific College
Alumni Library
1100 West Covina Blvd.
San Dimas, CA 91773

L.I.F.E. College Library
1100 Glendale Blvd.
Los Angeles, Calif. 90026

CONTENTS

		PAGE
I	BELIEVING IS SEEING	11
II	PRAYER ANSWERED, BUT!	14
III	LET US HAVE PEACE	17
IV	THE TREASURES OF DARKNESS	23
V	TALKING AND WALKING	26
VI	AN EMANCIPATED SOUL	30
VII	HIDDEN BUT NOT SEPARATE	35
VIII	THE WINNING SPIRIT	38
IX	POSSESSIVE FAITH	41
X	THE ARISTOCRACY OF PASSIONATE SOULS	46
XI	THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT	49
XII	UNTO THE LORD	52
XIII	THE ARRESTING WITNESS OF HOPE	55
XIV	ORGANS OF HUMANITY	60
XV	HARD-HEADED	63
XVI	MORE MAN!	66

022606

		PAGE
XVII	THE TRANSMISSION OF BLESSINGS . .	69
XVIII	EARTHEN VESSELS	72
XIX	SIGHT AND INSIGHT	75
XX	THE INCLUSIVE SACRIFICE	80
XXI	THE KINDLING MINISTRY OF ZEAL . .	83
XXII	THE LORDLY GRACE OF GIVING . . .	85
XXIII	COUNTERFEIT VIRTUE	88
XXIV	THE UNSPEAKABLE SECRET . . .	90
XXV	THE THORN THAT REMAINED . . .	93
XXVI	THE TREASURES OF DARKNESS . . .	97
XXVII	THE MYSTIC CONTROL OF THE JOURNEY .	102
XXVIII	THE SCHOOL OF GENTLENESS . . .	105
XXIX	CRUCIFIED BY NEGLECT	108
XXX	THE UNTRAVERSED CONTINENTS . .	113
XXXI	WHICH IS HIS BODY	116
XXXII	THE MIDDLE WALL	120
XXXIII	THE GREAT COMPANION AND HIS HOUSE .	124
XXXIV	INCAPABLE OF FEELING	130
XXXV	THE WATCHFUL USE OF OPPORTUNITY .	134
XXXVI	VOCAL THERAPY	136

		PAGE
XXXVII	TAKING ONE'S STAND	141
XXXVIII	THE GRACE OF READINESS	144
XXXIX	BENEFICENT RESISTANCES	149
XL	THE CONTAGION OF HEALTH	155
XLI	THE RESOURCES OF A GREAT APOSTLE	158
XLII	NOT SCARED!	162
XLIII	THE CAPACITY FOR SYMPATHY	165
XLIV	ENERGETIC CHARACTER	168
XLV	REPUDIATED ESTATES	171
XLVI	DRAWING A CROSS	175
XLVII	THE DISTANT SCENE AND THE NEXT STEP	179
XLVIII	THE TEST OF TENDENCY	185
XLIX	THE PATRIOTISM OF THE SOUL	188
L	THE KNIGHTS OF THE RED CROSS	192
LI	THE WITNESS OF DIFFICULT ENTERPRISE	195
LII	A GARDEN IN THE GLOOM	197
LIII	THE PLACE OF UNVEILING	203
LIV	THE POWER OF DARKNESS	206
LV	SHADOW AND SUBSTANCE	209
LVI	LIFE IN THE HEIGHTS	212

		PAGE
LVII	UNLEARNING THINGS	215
LVIII	THE INDWELLING WORD	220
LIX	SPIRITUAL DISTINCTION	226
LX	THE GIFT OF SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT	229
LXI	WIND AND SAIL	232
LXII	THE PATTERN IN THE MOUNT	235
LXIII	OUR VOICE AFTER DEATH	238
LXIV	GOD'S ENJOYMENT OF HIS CHILDREN	241
LXV	THE GREAT VENTURES	245
LXVI	PUTTING OUT ANTAGONISTIC FIRES	249
LXVII	WITNESSES WHO GIVE EVIDENCE	254
LXVIII	THE LORD'S CHASTENING	259
LXIX	ROAD-MAKERS	263

LIFE IN THE HEIGHTS

I

BELIEVING IS SEEING

"He staggered not . . . through unbelief."
Rom. iv. 20.

The divine promise had been given. There could be no doubt about that. But there were no external helps to make the soul certain of its fulfilment. The promise had no friends in the outer circumstances. The face of everything frowned upon it. Common experience was against it. Common sense was against it. And yet Abraham "staggered not"! He steadied himself on the promise. His soul nested in the divine purpose. He dwelt in the secret place of the Most High. By faith he companioned with friendly realities when every hard and glaring event appeared to be his foe. For faith is a finer sense even than common sense. Common sense, when it is despoiled of faith, is a very local and deceitful sight. But seeing is believing! Nothing of the

kind. Believing is the only true seeing! "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe, *thou shouldest see . . .* ?" "He *endured as seeing* Him who is invisible."

And we, too, have to trudge over roads where circumstances just shriek against our creeds. We have heard the divine word, but the "not likely" stares upon us on every side. And common sense is very aggressive, and it rears itself against the promise of our God. And the gathered wisdom of the world obtrudes itself against the hidden wisdom of the Lord. Our material setting is unfriendly. Carnal forces are ironical in their easy triumph. And we begin to look foolish in our simple faith. And, God help us! sometimes we begin to feel foolish, and we are tempted to make obeisance to the kingdom of the apparent, and to bow down and worship it.

Never was there greater need of deep-living men and women who will confront the proud and massed "unlikelies" with the spoken promise of our God. Never was the need more urgent that we should confirm ourselves in the promise amid the uncomfortable irony of circumstances, and the

loud and blatant taunt of our foes. We must wear the word of the Lord like an athlete's belt! "Having your loins girt about with truth!" These are the men and women who remain victors on the field at the end of the long and bloody day. At the beginning of day theirs is the faith which gives substance to things hoped for; at the end of the day the things hoped for have become their eternal possession.

II

PRAYER ANSWERED, BUT!

"Making request that . . . I might come unto you."
ROM. i. 10.

THE Apostle Paul had a great longing to visit Rome. He coveted the privilege of preaching the Gospel in the metropolis of the world. From Rome the story of grace might be radiated along the great highways to the ends of the earth. "After that I must visit Rome." "I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are in Rome also!" And so he prayed that his burning desire might be granted. And his prayer was answered, but in such a startlingly unexpected way. "When we came to Rome the centurion delivered the prisoners," and Paul was among them! He hoped to enter the Imperial city an ambassador in glorious freedom; he entered it in bonds.

And so the prayer was answered, but it was answered in a very surprising way.

The Apostle arrived in Rome, but such an arrival had never entered into his dreams. He was a prisoner in bonds, but the word of God was not bound; and I suppose that if Paul had never been taken to Rome we should never have had the epistles of the captivity. The Epistle to the Philippians, with all its mellow maturity of spiritual fruits, was born in bondage. And Colossians, with its glorious proclamation of the sole headship and mediatorship of Jesus Christ, was born in the same gloomy servitude. And what rare treasures there are in these and other letters, which we might never have known had the inspired writer always been free! "In my distress Thou hast enlarged me." The experience of the Psalmist was surely the experience of the Apostle, and we enjoy the splendid fruit of his enlargement. Paul entered Rome in bonds, but in his bondage he sent forth letters which have enriched the world with infinite blessedness.

So that God may answer our prayers, but the answer may come in a quite extraordinary way. We get where we desire to be, but by God's own path. It might seem as though it would have been better for every-

body if Paul had been in Rome and also been perfectly free. Yes, but I am not so sure that we should have had those immortal letters. What a life Paul would have lived had he been free to do whatever he pleased, and to go wherever he liked! It is notorious that when a man is made a bishop his days become so crowded that it is a rare thing for him to produce his greatest books! And who knows but that if this great Apostle had had more temporary freedom we might have had less permanent fruit. Sometimes the Lord permits our seclusion in order that we may do a larger work. His merciful sight has long range, and that is why our immediate circumstances are often so contradictory to our aspiration and prayer. The Lord looks beyond the temporary bondage to the ultimate freedom.

"The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower."

III

LET US HAVE PEACE

"Therefore, being justified by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Rom. v. 1.

This initial word "therefore" sends us back to the earlier part of the apostle's letter. We cannot leap into the course of the letter at any place we please and disregard every other part of the journey. We must accompany the apostle the whole length of the road. It is of the first importance that we not only arrive at the right places, but that we arrive there by the right approach. The approach is an essential factor in the mystery of revelation. There is a way of approaching Jerusalem which lays it out before you in fascinating perspective and proportion. There are poems whose worth is only betrayed by the right approach. There are two or three poems of Francis Thompson which only begin to live as you come upon them through certain queer, dingy

windings in his life. But it is probable that this sort of reasoning applies to everything, and that for everything there is "a way" of understanding.

What, then, is the approach suggested by this retrospective word "therefore"? Let us look back over the road already traversed. It began in a grim, dismal, depressing waste of sin, a waste from which there was no way out. It is almost Dantean in the completeness of its bondage and misery. Everybody has lost his righteousness, and everybody has lost his power to recapture it. Many devices are tried, and many, many attempts are made to escape, but all struggles are ineffective. The spiritual landscape revealed in the early part of this letter is as black and gloomy as Dartmoor round about Princetown Gaol. And there is no way of escape. In this horrible bondage every man is a prisoner for life.

No way out! No, not until God Himself made a way, a new and a living way. The infinite Love met our deep necessity, and across the waste a path appears which brightens more and more even into perfect day. In the atoning love and grace of Jesus

Christ the prisoners of despair become the children of eternal hope. Through the mystery of a Cross everybody can recover his crown. In a death whose mystery no one can explore we find the springs of a new life. And so completely does the divine grace meet our necessity that we may not only leave the imprisoning desert, we can also drop our bonds and our chains. The offered freedom is not only one of status, it is also one of strength and provision. It is more than an amnesty, more than a decree of emancipation. It is an endowment and a bequest. It is the liberty of health. It is the freedom of harmony.

> "Heaven comes down our souls to greet,
> And glory crowns the mercy seat."

And so this letter begins in clouds and darkness, but the black skies are rent at the end of the fourth chapter, and the blue heavens appear and the Kingdom of Heaven is opened to all believers.

And it is just here that we come up to that word "Therefore." "Therefore, seeing we are justified by faith, let us have peace with

God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is not an assertion that we have peace. It is an appeal to take it. An amnesty is offered; take it! Free pardon is proclaimed; take it! But can any one be so foolish as to see a wonderful deliverance of this kind and not accept it? Can we see the great possibility and not translate it into glad experience? Yes, that is the strange suggestion. Peace is offered, a peace which passeth understanding, but men won't have it. Men will even trudge up to the very Cross with their crushing burdens upon their backs, and then they turn away as though nothing had happened there, and they go on carrying their burdens with them. It is the one amazing mystery of human folly. Here is an appointed place where the heavy-laden pilgrim can lay down his load and find rest and peace. But no! He turns again to the dismal wilderness and to his bonds and imprisonment. We should surely have expected that when Canaan is offered to men and women they would fly from the desert. We should surely have assumed that when peace is spread before us we should fling ourselves down into it, as into a sweet flowering meadow, and we

should steep our weary souls in the restoring and reconciling grace of God.

What, then, shall we say to these things? Well, let us go over the road again which leads up to this great appealing word. Let us go over it very slowly. Let us stay with things long enough to feel them. Let us linger at the thirty-second verse of the first chapter, and at the fourth verse of the second chapter, and at the twentieth and twenty-third verses of the third chapter. Let us make a stop at every one of these places, changing all the plural numbers into the singular number, until we have read ourselves into a full understanding of the sacred word. And then more than anywhere else let us stay long at the twenty-fifth verse of the third chapter: "Jesus Christ, Whom God has sent forth to be a propitiation for our sins." Let everybody find himself in that all-enclosing word "our." Let us kneel at the Cross, and let us stay there until vital feelings begin to stir in the numb heart, and it is as though the winter is over and gone.

And for a second counsel let this be given; let us steadily look away from self to Christ. Here is a passage from one of Keble's let-

ters which I think is pregnant with sound spiritual advice: "I hold it to be a selfish and dangerous sort of thing for people to be always turning their eyes inward. Please not to let your own faults or anything uncomfortable be often uppermost. It is not natural it should be so in those for whom Christ died." No, it is not natural. The only natural thing is that we should be so fascinated and enraptured by the grace of Christ that faults and discomforts and fears and our sins will all be swallowed up in His glory. And therefore let us believingly and confidently accept His peace. Let us joyfully forget a heap of our own things! Let us joyfully remember the things that are in Christ! And in a joyful and enkindling hope let us go along our road in blessedness and peace.

IV

THE TREASURES OF DARKNESS

"Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope."—Rom. v. 3, 4.

Who would have imagined that hope would be the child of tribulation? But, then, who would have dreamed that the beautiful yellow pond-lily would have been born and nourished in its bed of slimy ooze? Who would have thought that from coal-tar we could extract colours whose brilliance would make Solomon's glory seem dim? Nay, who would have thought that from this same coal-tar, with its oppressive smell, we should derive some of our most delicate and exquisite perfumes? In coal-tar we can find the beauties of the dawn and the scent of the new-mown hay! And in tribulation we can find the strong grace of patience and the radiant grace of hope.

There is no dark experience from which we cannot obtain the stuff of noble charac-

ter. We can make the apparently unfriendly circumstance pay homage to our souls. "The clouds ye so much dread are big with blessing." Everything is not misfortune because it comes to us with a frown. A gracious gift can come to us in a gay and tinted envelope, but it can also come to us in an envelope with a black border. And therefore it is part of the ministry of believers in Christ Jesus to show to the world what benediction may hide in dark things. We are to be fine experts in growing lilies of peace in most unlikely places, and in deriving lovelier tints for the affections in the gloomy experiences of disappointment and apparent defeat. We are to make manifest that "the things which happened unto us turned out rather to be the furtherance of the Gospel."

Now graces, like diamonds resting on dark velvet, shine most resplendently against a foil of gloomy experience. It is so with peace in the midst of tribulation, it is so with hope in the time of general fainting, it is so with the joy of the Lord in the dark and cloudy day. When the noisome thing brings forth perfume, the scent is felt to be

of a superlative kind. In Christ Jesus we are made competent to give this witness before the world. It is the promise of His word: "All things work together for good to them that love God." Yes, even the dark things become the ground-bed of everlasting flowers. "Tribulation worketh patience and patience hope."

V

TALKING AND WALKING

"Walk in newness of life."—Rom. vi. 4.

Perhaps I can best express the purpose of this meditation by reminding my readers of the fable of the young bear who was puzzled to know how to walk. "Shall I," said he to the old she-bear, "shall I move my right paw first or my left, or my two front paws together, or the two hind ones, or all four at once, or how?" "Leave off thinking and walk," grunted the old bear. There are some people who will talk religious difficulties day and night. They want to know how to pray. They wonder how they are to love their neighbour. They are very keen to learn how to trust God. And they are full of eagerness as to how to help their fellowmen. And there are other talkers who are concerned about rank and priority in the scale of duties. Are they to do this first or the other? Should contemplation or

action be the first interest, or should the two move together? I think talkers of these kinds, and perhaps of many other sorts, were in the Apostolic Church, for the Apostle Paul puts such startling emphasis on the necessity of walking. He seems to say to his readers, and to say it again and again, "Stop talking and begin walking! How are you to do things? Just do them! Step out and get them done."

Let me recall some of the ways in which this counsel is given. Here is one. "Walk in love." It is so easy to talk about love. I think it is still easier to sing about it. And it makes us feel quite earnest when we inquire about it, and ask what love would do along this road or on that road. And the Apostle's answer to much of this talking is that we just begin walking. "Walk in love." Set out and do it, and do not spend in needless questioning the strength which ought to be used in chivalrous service. Just begin to love, and like the anxious young bear you will find that all your difficulties about how to do it are immediately over.

Here is another piece of Apostolic counsel: "Walk in truth." Perhaps some of

these early disciples were more inclined to be theologians than saints. For theology can be divorced from piety. We can be eagerly interested in a theory and only very indifferently concerned about the life. Theology may become a sort of moral opiate, and it can put some very precious faculties into a deep sleep. The only escape from this peril is to make our theology walk. We ought to see our great Christian doctrines walking about incarnated in the common life of the streets. The truth of the atoning love of our Saviour ought to walk through our ordinary affairs in the reconciled lives of ordinary people. The truth of justification by faith should be recognised by its fine stature and by its free swinging stride in the forum and the market place. The truth of God's forgiveness should not be merely enshrined in a fellowship of words. It ought to be embodied in forgiving men and women who are moving in the ways of the world, and who bear the seal of God's grace on their foreheads. We are to walk in truth, and in our walk the truth will have its finest witness.

It is by walking that most of our theoret-

ical difficulties are to be solved. Walking settles a heap of questions. "It came to pass that, as he was going he received his sight." We walk away from a crowd of needless embarrassments which always trouble the folk who are everlastingly waiting to know how to do things and never get them done. It is the life which is the light of men.

VI

AN EMANCIPATED SOUL

"The glorious liberty of the children of God."
ROM. viii. 21.

THERE is a precious bell in Philadelphia which is guarded with most jealous custody. It is the bell of Liberty. It is gloriously linked with the birthday of a national life. It tolled the glad and momentous tidings when a nation achieved its independence and breathed the air of freedom. If any one will turn to the life and letters of the Apostle Paul, and read and listen with diligent care, he will hear another bell of liberty ringing out the glad tidings that a man has been born again, and that he has breathed the wonderful air of spiritual freedom. I don't think you will travel very far in his life, or in his letters, without hearing the great bell of liberty sounding forth the blessed news of emancipation. Here are a few samples of what I call the bell-music

in the Apostle's witness: "Our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus;" "The liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free;" "Ye have been called unto liberty;" "The Lord's freeman;" "Free from the law;" "Free from sin;" "This liberty of yours." In this way does the music keep breaking out in Paul's speech and letters, the great bell-note which signalises the attainment of spiritual freedom and independence, "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Now this sense of joy in a new-found freedom breathes in all his utterance. Paul is like a man who has strangely emerged from constraints and limitations of which he was scarcely conscious—certainly not fully conscious until he has passed beyond them. I have a friend who has never been rapturously appreciative of natural scenery. When others have been revelling on some marvellous panorama of colour, or tracing some luring horizon-line, he has remained strangely quiet and unmoved. But now the rapture has come to him, and he thrills to nature's glory. What has happened? By an apparent chance, and to his staggering surprise, he learned that his eyes were defec-

tive, and that he was not seeing the world at all as it was seen by his friends. He thought he had perfect sight, and he was partially blind! The oculist gave him new sight, and he discovered a new world.

"Thou knowest not that thou art blind!" That had been Paul's condition as he journeyed to Damascus. Blind indeed! He boasted of his sight! And then Somebody came and touched him, and he found new eyes, and new sight, and a new world. And his consequent joy and freedom of movement were almost like a dream. But there were deeper elements in his liberty even than these. He passed from blindness to sight, but there was a second transition which really explains the first. He passed from law to grace, which is like a child going from the school-house to his home. Watch a child when school is out and home is in sight! And Paul was like that. And now I think of it, that was his own illustration of the transition. "The law," he says, "was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." He passed from the sphere of statute, and curb, and restraint, and ferule, and prison, into the warm, sunny, genial intimacies of home.

And oh, the freedom of it! He had been a pupil in a hard school, and now he revelled in the glory of the liberty of the children of God. He had lived in the repressive compound of law; now he roamed in the open country of grace. His soul became "sportive as the fawn which, wild with glee, across the lawn and up the mountain springs."

But there was another transition, and in which order it comes—whether before or after, or with the others, it does not really matter—but the Apostle passed from sin to holiness. Sin had held him as if it were a corpse which he was forced to carry upon his back. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He could not shake it off. And then, by the wonderful grace of God, the corpse was removed, and it was buried in some unfathomable sea known only to the heart and wisdom of God. And then Paul discovered that he was no longer wedded to death, but to life, and to life that was sweet, and pure, and radiant as a bride. "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." And oh, the freedom of it! Guilt gone, sin gone, and in their place a holy life as lovely as a summer's

morn. Paul's sense of freedom was the secret of his terrific vitality. In all these wonderful transitions an energy was released, which drove the torpor out of his powers, and all his faculties became like wide-awake sentinels standing at their posts. Everything about Paul pulses with life. He challenges grim difficulties with the happy air of a man going to a wedding. He undertakes vast enterprises which leave other men gasping for breath. Paul was tremendous in his vitality, and he was vital because he was free.

And because he was so vital he was gloriously vitalising. We can go to him for refreshment, and we can always find it. His thought is like wine. His word is filled with the life which he borrowed from the Lord. He is gloriously free and vital, and communion with him is an inspiration.

VII

HIDDEN BUT NOT SEPARATE

"Thou didst hide Thy face."—Ps. xxx. 7.
"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"
Rom. viii. 35.

There can be a hiding while there is no alienation. The face may be hidden, but there is no withdrawal of the Presence. There may be mist, and cloud, and darkness, but the Lord has not gone away. Events may be perplexing, but His love abides. Our understanding may faint while the heart continues her sacred communion. The light may tarry, the Life is here!

There is no one so blind as the one who claims to see everything clearly. Who has not met the trifler to whom everything is plain? He has the key to every lock, the answer to every riddle! And this is the knowledge that "puffeth up." It is a very dry and unperceptive thing. It lacks the softening moisture of humility and rever-

ence and awe. It wants the liquid humour without which the eye can have no vision.

God hides His face! It may be that there are some things that would never come to any life or stature if it were not for the influence of the darkening cloud. There are many ferns which would never unroll their beauty if it were not for the damp, cooling ministry of the shade. Who can grow ferns in the dry light of the garish day? And there are precious ferns in the realm of the soul which would never appear in strength and loveliness were it not for the hiding of the Face. There is patience, and meekness, and humility, and modesty, and there are the fine delicate ferns we call reticence and reserve. What is character like if these are wanting? And it may be that if there were no "hiding," no shadow, no cloud, these most precious virtues and graces might never adorn the soul; or, if they did, they would be so feeble as to immediately wither away "when heat cometh." But when He hideth His face the twilight that falls upon us is the shadow of the Almighty.

But let us say it once again, when the face is hidden the love is near. Nothing can take

that away, not even our sin. And love never sleeps. Love never faileth. She never drops out of the ranks while stronger troops march on. She never faints, and she is always in ministry, working out her own gracious purpose night and day. Is the face hidden in our own day? The Love is here: nay, infinitely better, the Lover is here! To believe it, even while we are in the shadow, is to grow in heaven's gracious mist, to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

VIII

THE WINNING SPIRIT

"We are more than conquerors through Him."
Rom. viii. 37.

This word of the Apostle expresses the victorious mood in which victory was achieved. The early believers in the Lord Jesus won the victory in their hearts before they won it on the field. In Christ Jesus they anticipated triumph, and their anticipations made the triumph possible. And this mood is one of the secrets of victory in every kingdom. Is there any record of an army winning a battle when the soldiers entered the conflict believing they would fail? Such a gloomy lack of confidence would breed a dismal progeny of wants, and the army would be sapped of its vital resources before the battle began. Our biggest inspirations blow from the gates of the morning! Let those gates be closed, and the soul will be deprived of the mystic oxygen which is absolutely

essential to her life and strength. There is to me a very real significance, and therefore something of spiritual direction, in the words of the prophet which tell me that the glory of the Lord entered the temple by the gateway *"which looked towards the east."* He entered by the door which looked towards the new dawnings, the new revelations, the door of expectancy and hope! "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the King of Glory shall come in!" Our eager confidences become the highway of the Lord.

And so it is that, in a very real degree, we can ascertain the nature of our coming victories or defeats by examining the character of our expectations. We may regard all our unbeliefs as the ministers and precursors of disaster. Whenever did unbelief go into battle singing a song of praise? When did unbelief hammer the strongholds of iniquity with blows which shook its walls into dust? When did unbelief stride out into the second mile with the fine determination to make the second mile the justification of the first? It is only the assurance of victory which works miracles of this kind, and it works them every day. In the spir-

itual realm a healthy confidence not only sees a highway stretching through coming days, and brightening ever more and more unto perfect day, but it makes that highway the road on which there come the marvellous reinforcements of the spirit, which transform all antagonisms into opportunities of glorious achievements.

And surely this victorious mood is needed to-day. Our tasks are tremendous. To lose confidence is to lose everything. The devil always wins when he breaks our assurance. To be sure in Christ Jesus is the beginning of victory. Nay, it is victory! "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith."

IX

POSSESSIVE FAITH

"The love of God, which is in Christ Jesus."
ROM. viii. 39.
"He loved me."—GAL. ii. 20.

PAUL'S devotional thought alternated between the universal and the individual. The regular action of his religious life was begotten of a sort of pendulum motion, moving between what God had done for the race and what God had done for him. Or, if I may change the figure, his religious life had the movement of the skylark; it soared to heights of comprehensive vision, "an ethereal minstrel pilgrim of the sky," and it songfully surveyed the redemption of the world. Then it returned to its nest upon the ground, and rested in the assurance that its ground was hallowed ground, the home of redemptive love and grace. No one could ever say that the Apostle Paul forgot the world. The world was his parish; it filled his dreams. He had found the pearl of

great price, he had entered into the unsearchable riches of Christ, and he felt himself indebted to everybody on the planet, and the indebtedness sent him trudging along any road, however long, however dangerous, however tedious, that he might persuade some one to share his wealth. "I am become all things to all men." He certainly had the world view. Truly this man was a citizen of the world.

And yet, I say, he came back to his own nest. He did not lose himself in vague theories in which no soul could find a home. The universal localised itself in a human habitation. That which embraced the uttermost parts of the earth also included him. "He loved *me,* and gave Himself for *me*;" "He called me;" "He revealed His Son in me." All these are home-songs. They are the glad croonings of the individual heart resting upon its own nest. The Apostle has been called the expert master of the preposition, and, indeed, there is a whole literature of grace in the prepositions of his epistles. But I am not quite sure that he is not just as much a master of the pronoun as he is of the preposition. At any rate, if

any one will carefully study the great Apostle's use of the pronoun he will find himself in very rich spiritual mines. And I would especially suggest that we study his use of the possessive pronoun, where he draws some universal treasure into his own life. We can watch him, as it were, drawing up his blind, and opening his window, and letting in the splendour of the sunrise in Jesus Christ our Lord. And as the glory breaks into his chamber he sings aloud of "my light!" He looks out of his window upon the inheritance of grace, and he speaks of "my earnest expectation and hope." He surveys the manifold glory of the gospel of Christ, and then proudly declares, "Whereof I was made a minister." He lets his eyes roam over continents and worlds of divine love, and he rapturously exclaims, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me."

It is this vital use of the personal pronoun which converts a vague creed into a thrilling life. For instance, let any one take the Apostle's Creed, and insert a few personal possessive pronouns, or transpose its phrases so as to suggest individual possession, and he will be amazed at the sharpness of the

transformation. Universal statements, which run over the mind without leaving any impression, issue a very startling challenge if we make them indicate a personal possession. Take this great word from the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." A man may say that, as millions do, and the large vagueness of the assertion may leave no deeper mark upon his mind and heart than if a feather from a bird's wing were to blow across a face of rock. But now insert the possessive pronoun, and mark the change: "I believe in the forgiveness of *my* sins." The thing at once becomes alive, and full of challenge. We shrink from the shock of the word. We are pulled up and made to think. We are face to face with reality, and we feel the beating pulse in this limb of the Creed. And what is the worth of a creed unless it can be thus vitalised by a personal faith, which converts assertion into reverent claim and then converts the claim into possession?

Or, take this other great word from the Creed: "I believe in the life everlasting." That confession may mean something or nothing. The universal may have no grip,

and I may say the big thing and remain unmoved. When men talk in millions they are beyond my stride. If they come down to the limits of my income their talk becomes alive. Well, then, let me bring this great credal assertion out of its ineffective range and lay it alongside my own affairs. Let me individualise it by the use of a singular possessive pronoun. "I believe that *my* life is everlasting." Again one feels the challenge of reality. We may recoil from the great word, as indeed we should recoil from it unless it has been given to us by our Lord. But if He has called us into His communion, and we have answered His call, then with joyful pride we may proclaim our faith: "I believe that my life is everlasting." And with equal joy and assertion we may say to our brother in the faith: "I believe that thy life is everlasting." In Christ the personal pronoun unveils our crown.

X

THE ARISTOCRACY OF PASSIONATE SOULS

"Fervent in spirit."—Rom. xii. 11.

It is possible to have in life a fervour of exceedingly limited range. In the house of my being there may be a fire in only one room. The warmth may be in single aspects of character, in particular powers and demeanours. The fervour may be in work and not in worship. It may be in controversy, but not in service. It may be in a hobby, and not in a calling. We may go from one room to another and find a startling change of temperature. In one room it is like summer-time, in another it is like winter. The business room is at blood-heat, while the oratory is at zero. Thomas Arnold, of Rugby, used to say that when he could go from his knees into his schoolroom and feel that the temperature changed in the transition he knew that there was something very faulty and perverted in his relationship to

God. When the fire of the Holy Spirit is here and not there, there is somewhere a break in our communion.

The Apostle Paul enjoins a fervour which pervades and possesses the entire life. It is a matter of central heating, which keeps the whole house in the strength and comfort of a uniform temperature. It is not intensity of faculty, it is fervency of spirit. It is not a partial enthusiasm, it is a devotion which fills the life. We are to be spiritually passionate, and this is the basal passion which radiates warmth into all the faculties and powers, and imparts a sacred glow and vigour to every aspect of character and conduct. And to the great apostle this passion is just the fire of holy love, it is the ardour of entire consecration, it is the heavenly enthusiasm begotten of intimate companionship with the Lord. Yes, it is holy love, kindling everything with its hallowing flame, and transforming even the commonest bush into the radiant home of our God.

It is a familiar word, but one worth repeating, that no virtue is safe until it becomes enthusiastic. It is safe only when it becomes the home of fire. In the high realms

of the spirit it is only the passionate that is secure. Noble passion carries immunity. Evil contagions find an easy prey in the lukewarm, in those whose moral fires are dull, and who do not confront the enemy with the power of a fierce destruction. The Seraphim, those pure spirits who are in the immediate service of the Lord, are the "burning ones," and it is their noble privilege to carry fire from off the altar and touch with purifying flame the lips of the unclean.

"As I mused the fire burned." That is how every fire is kindled, whether it be clean or unclean. Fires begin to burn in meditation, in contemplation, in communion. When we humbly but persistently seek the intimacy of the Spirit it is inevitable that we shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit "and with fire." We shall be seized in the mighty constraints of the eternal Lover, and we shall love Him because He first loved us.

XI

THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT

"Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."—Rom. xiii. 12.

Here is a strange spectacle, the children of light wearing the armour of darkness! They are fighting the devil with the devil's weapons. Satan is seeking to cast out Satan. The soldiérs of Jesus are harbouring the very spirit they are out to fight! No wonder that their warfare has no conquests, and that they spend their strength in vain. The sharpest sword becomes a painted lath when our spirits are defiled. In these realms a man's most fearful foes are they of his own household. The indwelling things of darkness infest and weaken all our powers.

A man can no more entertain sin and be virile than he can entertain a cancer and be healthy. Cancer sends its deadly trail throughout the entire currency of the blood; and indwelling sin deposits its deadly sedi-

ment on every power of mind and soul. And, therefore, the first requisite of an efficient army is the mobilisation of moral and spiritual resources. The most perilous of our weaknesses is an unclean spirit; the most vulnerable of all unpreparedness is that of the inner man.

The Apostle bids us get rid of those deadly besetments. "Cast off the works of darkness!" He seems to speak of them as if they were a loathsome garment, as something that we are wearing which is more a hindrance than a help. But can we throw them away like a coat? Evil becomes a second nature. What was at first like a loose garment becomes at last like a skin. And we are not going to divest ourselves of the evil thing by an act of even fervent resolution. No man can accomplish it in his own strength, and it will be vain for him to try. The great Apostle teaches that this form of disinvestiture is not an act of will, it is a work of grace. To strip us of the sin which doth so closely cling to us demands the infinite forces of salvation. The Cross is still needful to remove my shame and stain.

But when the soul has been rid of its de-

filements, how bright and gleaming is its armour! The cleansed soul is shining in all the translucent purity of the children of God. It is "light in the Lord." It has armour for its own defence, for a character which is possessed and illumined by God's holy grace and love is gloriously immune. "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day." And it has armour for all its noble offences, for what is so arresting as light, what so penetrating, so convincing, so overwhelming? "The light of Israel shall be for a fire."[2] "Let us put on the armour of light."[2]

XII

UNTO THE LORD

"Whether we live, we live unto the Lord."
ROM. xiv. 8.

I AM recalling two very strong and gracious testimonies which were paid to the life and character of the late Bishop Westcott. One was by Archdeacon Boutflower: "In the presence of the unseen Westcott met all life, and you could not surprise him out of it." And the other was by Canon Scott Holland: "He read and worked in the very mind in which he prayed." Both testimonies are concerned with the same experience. Bishop Westcott conveyed to his friends the moving suggestion of the divine presence, because he lived continually in conscious and all-controlling communion with God. When he passed from one thing to another there was no change of atmosphere. Nay, there was no change of spiritual posture; the mood in which he studied was the mood in which he

prayed. His religious life was not a bundle of shreds and patches. It was a garment woven throughout, and without seam. If you came upon him unawares the mystic influence was not absent. You could not "surprise him out of it."

Arnold of Rugby said in one of his letters that he was very much dissatisfied with his religious life because he realised such a change in spirit and attitude when he passed from his private devotions to the common affairs and business of the school. And that is a dissatisfaction which is shared by a host of Christian believers. We leave something behind when we leave our chamber. The spirit of worship is not regnant in our work. We do not pray without ceasing. We do not meet all life in the presence of the unseen. And, therefore, there are long stretches of unconsecrated ground. We worship in this mountain, and perhaps in Jerusalem, but the distance between the two heights is not the highway of the Lord. Here and there in life there is a burning bush, but the entire forest is not aflame with the glory of the Lord. We go to service occasionally; life is not a ceaseless worship.

And yet our Father seeks unbroken communion with His children. He would have us meet everything in the fellowship of the unseen Friend. In His light we are to see light. Everything is to be viewed in the light of His countenance. The unfailing sense of His presence makes life a continual consecration. We are always at worship, and the whole world becomes the temple of the Lord.

XIII

THE ARRESTING WITNESS OF HOPE

"The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."—ROM. xv. 13.

"THE God of Hope." Does this mean the God Whose nature is distinguished by hope, Who broods over the dark regions of chaos with quickening confidence? Do the words describe an attribute in the Godhead, some quenchless optimism through all the changes of the countless years? Or do they rather describe the source of our hope, the great luminary at which we light all our lamps for our appointed journeys? Some commentators emphasise the former and some the latter. But why should we separate the two interpretations? They are a wedded pair, and to divide them is a most unnatural divorce. They belong to each other as the convex and concave sides of a circle. Nay, they are like spring and stream; they are like fountain and issues. Hope dwells in God,

and God imparts it. Light dwells in the sun, and every flame on the planet borrows its fire from the central altar. The God of hope kindles hope in the hearts of His children; they are lit up with light divine. "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace, that ye may abound in hope." The sun is the primary explanation of all our lamps and firesides.

The Scriptures reveal God's wonderful hope for the race, and for every member of it. What amazing vistas of possibility stretch before us in the Word of God, unveiled by Him Who is the light of life! If you would know what hopes our God entertains for you and me and all men, take time to look down those marvellous stretches of moral and spiritual distinctions which are revealed in His Word. There are corners in the Scriptures, points of view we may call them, which are like the head of the Gemmi Pass, where you come in sight of the Bernese Oberland, or like the summit of the Col de Bahm, where Mont Blanc breaks into view, and overwhelms you with his glory. Stand at those scriptural heights—you can find them both in the Gospels and the

Epistles—and gaze over the far-stretching landscape of grace beyond grace, and glory beyond glory—vast reaches of inheritance which the Lord of hope has appointed as our spiritual possession. And when you have looked long enough to be overwhelmed by it, and to be thrown upon your knees, then be very bold with yourself in Christ Jesus, and say to yourself, "Mine, by the grace of God! Me, by the grace of God!" Lift up your eyes unto the hills, the hills of moral and spiritual attainment, and let your hearts laugh and sing at the vision of your splendid inheritance. Let the good Lord light up your spirit with a hope kindred to His own. Let the Father of lights light every lamp in your soul, until your whole being is aglow with the radiance of Christian aspiration.

And is there anything of which the world is in greater need just now than men and women who are clothed in the shining glory of unquenchable hopes? The world is confused, and disillusioned, and depressed. Our ideals have been smitten, and they are like quenched and broken lamps. And, therefore, of what unspeakable worth are

men and women who have somehow got mysterious supplies of oil, and whose lamps have not gone out in the gusty night! I was reading a letter the other day from the city of Vienna, where pessimism hangs over everything like a dull and heavy pall of smoke. "If a man with hope in his face walks down the street people will stop and look at him, because he is such an exception to the rule." That sentence is a revelation of tragic necessity. A man with hope in his face goes through Vienna like a man with a lantern on a dark road, where other folk are just groping their way in depressing gloom.

But isn't this just one of the characteristics of a true believer in Christ—"a man with hope in his face"? Is not this one of his most radiant distinctions? The Scriptures affirm and reaffirm that this is how he is really to be known as he goes along the common streets of life. He is to be known by the hope in his face. "Once ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." They were once like the dull carbon filament before it is pervaded by the electric energy, but now they are like the same filament when the mysterious current has turned its dark-

ness into light. They are spiritually incandescent, burning and shining lights, in the power of the Holy Ghost. A man with hope in his face! A man lit up! That is a man of the Lord's own making, and every street ought to be illumined by His witness. Now "the God of hope" fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.

XIV

ORGANS OF HUMANITY

"The members should have the same care one for another."—1 Cor. xii. 25.

Every member of the body is to be the instrument of the body. One man is as the eye of the corporate body, and it is his sacred function to look and watch in the interests of the body. Another man is as an ear, and it is his holy office to be alert and listening in the interests of the body. Every member is to be a social minister. No one's personality is to be used as an instrument of selfishness, but as an organ of humanity.

Now it would seem as if the smaller circle is the realm of surest happiness and freedom. The wider the circle the larger will be the gathering ground of sorrows and cares! Might it not therefore be an act of worldly wisdom just to close our eyes and shut our ears, or exercise them only in the tiny area of our own affairs? "I want that

widow well out of my ears, with her ailing and wailing!" Very well, just turn a deaf ear, and you make your escape. And that cry from Macedonia! How troublesome is this wail from the larger circle! And, if we heed it, it will probably lead to increased burdensomeness and fiercer persecution! The folk in Troas who do not hear the cry have the happier and easier lot! Very well, then, just close your ears, and very soon you will not hear the pathetic cry, and Macedonia will have ceased to exist. Surely, we have this way of escape! We can shut out the body and be at rest.

The reckoning is altogether false. In the smaller circle we may possibly find an ignoble ease. But ease is not peace. Ease is just the indolence of the beast; peace is the holy restfulness of the saint. Ease is the stupor born of perverted relations; peace is the harmony of right relations. Ease is the condition of degeneracy; peace is the condition of growth. Whenever my power is used as an instrument of ease and selfishness there is inevitable degradation. Everything shrinks in the smaller circle, yes, even my capacity for the enjoyment which I am so

anxious to retain. My receptivity shrinks. That is a terrible law. If I shut out my brother I am unable to retain myself. Dismiss him and I lose myself, for in dismissing him I dismiss the Lord Himself. "Ye did it unto Me!" The purposed organ of humanity shrivels into a puny, selfish instrument which has no vital communion with the Lord.

The member is appointed for the service of the body. The larger circle is our purposed sphere and home. The cry from Macedonia may lead us into new distresses, but it will also lead us into newer wealth in human fellowships, and it will give us larger access into the unsearchable riches of Christ.

XV

HARD-HEADED

"In understanding be men."—1 Cor. xiv. 20.

In some things we are to remain as children. We are not to grow away from their simplicity. Here the struggle is not to win new fields but to keep hold of land originally possessed. In these things retention is our noblest conquest. "In malice be children." We are not to grow into the personal knowledge of the evil thing, and become experts in its deadly ministry. We are to seek our greatness in our ignorance. Or, if we have "advanced" into the dark experience, we are to renew our royal mastery by a wise retreat. In relation to some holy attainments it is the simple truth to say that going backwards is the only progress. "Except ye *turn again,* and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

But in understanding we are to be men.

Indeed, one of our surest defences against belittling feelings is the cultivation of a more spacious mind, a mind which moves reverently but freely in the realm of truth revealed to us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Bitterness is always the product of narrowness. A man may be proud of his largeness of mind, he may boast of the roominess of his creed, but if he be bitter and malicious it is a sure sign that his vital thought is contracted and that he has not found the glorious liberty of the children of God. If the atmosphere in the berth is pestilential it is because the porthole is closed.

Mr. Roosevelt said on one occasion that he did not know which quality is most productive of evil to mankind in the long run, hardness of heart or softness of head. That is a very suggestive word; but may we not add that softness of head produces hardness of heart? No man can be so cruel as the man of loose and undecisive thought. Soft thinking is allied to hard feeling. It is not the water which springs from soft limestone which is the sweetest and healthiest to drink; it is the water that comes from the hidden

fortresses and strongholds of granite hills. If in understanding we are truly men, our emotional streams shall be like unto the river "which maketh glad the city of God."

XVI

MORE MAN!

"Quit you like men."—I Cor. xvi. 13.

We have used four English words to express the one original word. No one English word can carry the wealth and energy of the Apostle's word. Perhaps we come nearest to it in our vigorous phrase, "Play the man!" The man in men is to be heroically displayed on the difficult fields of the Kingdom. The manly is to be one of the tokens of the Christly. A big manliness is to be the sign and witness of a big faith, and is to bear its testimony to the dynamic of God's grace. "More men? More man! It's there we fail."

For what is our religion worth if it does not reinforce our stock of "man"? Unless our religion gives a man "more man," what part does it play upon the bloody field? A strong and yet delicate manliness, delicate in its chivalry as well as athletic in its

prowess, is one of the most impressive presences which go along the streets of time. Everybody is arrested by it. It is not only arresting, but commanding. It is not merely an object of interest, it is a fountain of power. Virtue goes out of it. It shapes the crude stuff of circumstances to the pattern of its own fine visions. It informs all its issues with its own essence. Its speech is manly, but so is its silence. Its aggression is manly, but so are its restraints. It dyes everything in its own colour, and all its effluences carry the red blood of a consecrated man of God.

Now this is one of our supreme needs today—as much in America as in Britain, as much in France as among the new friends of Christ in China or in India. More man! More of that inner mystic dynamic which makes everything in one's life a well-equipped soldier of the Lord. And how are we to get "more man"? Not by shouting, either in the roar of the lion or the scream of the eagle. No; not by striving, or crying, or lifting up our voice in the street. We shall get more "man" from the Son of Man. All our springs are in Him. He is "the very

fount of our new day." And the gift will come to us on invisible roads, in holy commerce, through reverent communion, and in humble and thoughtful worship at the springs. It is born from above. What other way is there? I know of none. What is born of the Son of Man is of the Son of Man sustained. The Redeemer provides bread for His own creation. In His provision we become partakers of His nature, and the Son of Man reincarnates Himself in the manliness of the men whom He redeems.

XVII

THE TRANSMISSION OF BLESSINGS

"The God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our troubles, that we may be able to comfort."—2 Cor. i. 3, 4.

Here is one of the great secrets of great living. If we would help others efficiently we must recall how God has dealt with us. Forgetfulness in the one direction will breed selfishness in the other. Where there is no keen sense of divine mercy there is not likely to be a broad stream of vital beneficence. And even if we were inclined to be beneficent our service would probably be wanting in fine sense and discernment. It is the remembrance of God's mercy which inclines us to be merciful, and it is the same remembrance which endows our mercy with wise and intelligent sight. What the Lord has done for us will teach us what we ought to do to others; and how the Lord did it unto us will instruct us as to our appropriate moods and manners. "I forgave thee all that debt;

oughtest thou not, therefore, to have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, as I had compassion on thee?'' Our obligations are born in our blessings; if we seriously consider the one we shall undertake the other.

And here the Apostle asks us to remember our Lord's comforts. We are to retrace our steps down the old road and call to mind just how the Lord visited us in the consolations of His grace. We are to recall how He came to us in the dark hours of our sorrow and pain. We are to recollect how He approached us, and in what particular manner He gave us His cordials and balms. In which of His promises did we find the richest bread of endurance? What word was it that relit our flickering lamp? Which of His inspired hymns gave us new wings of faith and hope? What holy vision took us far beyond the darkness of our prison-house to fairer worlds on high? What was it brought back a little salt and savour to our tasteless days? So are we to retread our yesterdays, with memory and imagination all awake, repeopling the road with the messenger comforts of our Lord.

And all this we are to do in order that we

may learn how to comfort others. We were comforted in order that we might be comforters. We are to take the light He gave us and kindle another man's lamp. We are to take His tenderness and touch the sorrows of others as He touched ours. Within a few hours after Mrs. Gladstone had lost her noble husband she was in the home of a poor miner, comforting a widow whose husband had just been killed in the mine. Comforted to comfort! And what need there is of comforters to-day! Let us go back on our old roads and diligently study God's dealings with us, that in the power of His grace we may be skilful in the comfort of others.

XVIII

EARTHEN VESSELS

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels."
2 Cor. iv. 7.

There is something wrong when the vessel robs the treasure of its glory, when the casket attracts more attention than the jewel which it bears. There is a very perverse emphasis when the picture takes second place to the frame, and when the ware which is used at the feast becomes a substitute for the meal. There is something deadly in Christian service when "the excellency of the power" is of us and not of God. Such excellency is of a very fleeting kind, and it will speedily wither as the green herb and pass into oblivion.

Our God delights to put His treasure into unobtrusive vessels. He loves to put His bounty into modest hands. How often He manifests His power in conditions which excite surprise in all who see it! We cannot

explain how such power appears in such simplicity. It seems as if such a radiant flame should be in a more ornate and attractive lamp. Moody's excellency was in an earthen vessel, and many doctors of divinity have wondered at the strange association. There are thousands of men who are better speakers than Moody, and there are thousands who are better singers than Sankey; the vessels are more chaste and striking, but the treasure is not there in overwhelming glory!

What mighty power God pours through the earthen vessels of plain and simple speech! He does not wait for eloquence. Indeed, there is a form of eloquence of which the Lord seems to be afraid, and He leaves it to fly by and "lose itself on desolate seas." And then again, what marvellous power is packed into broken prayers! The eloquent prayer may attract attention to itself, and we may admire the suppliant instead of reverently adoring the Lord; but the simple prayer, broken it may be by a hundred hesitancies, reveals the sacred force which takes the Kingdom of Heaven by storm.

And then how God honours simple and un-

showy methods in the ministry of the Kingdom! The spectacular organisation is just a splendid emptiness, while some quiet and unobtrusive fellowship is just laden with the excellent glory of the Lord. I think we are living in a time when the earthen vessel has become a costly exhibit. We like large things, showy things, sensational things, noisy things, while God still delights in the earthen things, and He still chooses "the things which are not, to bring to nought the things which are."

And so we must be prayerfully thoughtful at all times lest we appoint vessels to the service of the Kingdom which will absorb the glory which belongs to God alone. But to be thoughtful is not to be careless. Grace puts no premium upon shabbiness and disorder. We must not offer to the Lord of that which costs us nothing. Our best and hardest pains must be devoted to getting rid of all that is theatrical, spectacular, and vainglorious; and we must present to the Lord a lamp which is clean and burnished, but which will not distract attention from the Presence and glory of the Lord.

XIX

SIGHT AND INSIGHT

"The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."—2 Cor. iv. 18.

To be able to see the first is sight; to be able to see the second is insight. The first mode of vision is natural, the second mode is spiritual. The primary organ in the first discernment is intellect; the primary organ in the second discernment is faith. To be able to see "the things which are unseen" is the commanding difference between the mind of the flesh and the mind of the spirit. One gazes upon the outsides of things, and thereby misinterprets them, for it never sees their vital currency; the other pierces through the outer veils, and beholds "the things which are unseen," and it discovers something of the secrets of the divine order. All through the Scriptures this contrast between sight and insight is being continually presented to us, and everywhere we are

taught to measure the meagreness and stinginess of the one, and set it over against the fulness and expansiveness of the other.

Here is Elijah hard beset by material circumstances. He is hemmed in by a material host, and in all the enveloping circle there does not seem to be the narrowest break through which he can escape. Materialism is rampant and regnant, and it has him fast in its grip. Every visible thing reveals a prison-gate, and it is closed against his release. He is shut in by "the things which are seen," and there is no way out. Who has not shared his experience? Our material circumstances have gathered and narrowed around us until we felt we were in the closing embrace of tyrannical iron arms. Perhaps the narrowing circle meant a lessening business, and so it concerned our daily bread. Or perhaps it was the invincible approach of some sickness, and its powers seemed to fill the entire field. Or perhaps in days of worldly confusion we felt that material forces were altogether dominant, and we were being crushed in their merciless grip. In one of a hundred ways we may have been overwhelmed with

the sense that "the things which are seen" were the only things on the field. Well, that was the condition of the prophet's servant: the "seen" was to him the "all." Everything was there. He used the powers of common observation, and so everything was opaque, and nothing was transparent. But the prophet had eyes of faith, and sight was sublimed into insight. Material veils became transparent, and an invisible world rose into view. "Lo, the mountains were full of horses and chariots of fire!" The mystic forces were on the march. The little circle of material foes was only a fragment of the contending hosts. God was at work! His troops were on the field. The mountains were full of them. And the spirit of the prophet beheld these things of the Spirit, and he waited for the issues with unshaken confidence and equanimity. The servant was gifted with sight, the prophet was gifted with insight. One had reason, the other had faith.

Here is a certain widow going up to the Temple to worship. As she enters she quietly drops her offering into the Treasury. When the Treasurer gathers up her

coins he is half-amused at the contribution. Two mites, which make a farthing! Not much here for the endowment of the Temple! Not much here for the emoluments of the priests! As "things which are seen" the coins were about next door to nothing! But there was One, sitting over against the Treasury, who was looking on with quite another sort of eyes. To Him the visible became transparent, and an invisible world appeared. "The things which are not seen" came into view. Behind the two mites He saw a precious motive, He saw a spirit of adoration, He saw a passion of love and sacrifice. The Treasurer saw two mites, Jesus saw a whole heaven, He saw something akin to the unsearchable riches of His own grace.

Here is the Church at Rome. It is reported to Paul that the Church was "spoken against by everybody." The folk of Rome can see nothing about it which is grand or impressive. It has gathered no splendour of great names, no weight of distinguished authority. It is mean and commonplace, and therefore it is despised and rejected. As one of "the things which are seen" it does

not count. As one of "the things which are seen" it is lost in the magnificence of imperial Rome. But the Apostle Paul looks upon this Church with other eyes, and invisible things appear. Unseen glories troop out and rest upon the commonplace conventicle. Mysterious distinctions gather about the insignificant Church. "To all that are in Rome, *beloved of God.*" And now what about imperial kinship? Here is splendour of lineage and relation! "*Called to be saints.*" These obscurities are here seen to be wearing proud titles. They are heirs to vast inheritances. Grace and peace are resting upon them. In Paul's eyes these men and women are greatly distinguished. He beholds their invisible fellowships, and they shine in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The passing Roman sees only a grey commonplace, Paul sees the children of God. "Now the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

XX

THE INCLUSIVE SACRIFICE

"They first gave their own selves unto the Lord."
2 Cor. viii. 5.

They gave their own selves to the Lord, and then they gave their money. The one followed the other in natural and vital succession. If the first gift is sincere, the second gift is certain. If the first gift is partial and hesitant, the second gift will be maimed and reluctant. The vital gift of self is gloriously inclusive of every other offering. It is the whole circle which encloses the varied segments. It is the integer which covers the fractions. It is the great surrender which draws everything else into its train.

When self has been yielded to the Lord all other interests and possessions in our life will bear the marks of the Lord Jesus. Everything and every circumstance will be regarded and welcomed as part of the sur-

rendered host. The healthy spiritual life is not so much a procession of sacrifices as a spirit of inclusive consecration. The queen bee has winged her flight in a certain direction and the entire swarm is in her train. I think this must be the meaning of a sentence in a letter which was found in the pocket of a French sergeant who was found dead on the battlefield of the Marne. The letter is written to his parents, and this is the sentence: "You know how I had made the sacrifice of my life before leaving." That was the all-inclusive surrender, and it embraced anything and everything that might follow. Come what will, my God, and come how it will, my life is Thine! Here is my life, for all it is and for all it has! Here is my life, for all it meets and all it does! "I had made the sacrifice of my life before leaving!" "They first gave their own selves unto the Lord."

Now this is the secret of the Christian life, to make the inclusive sacrifice. Religious life is inevitably tedious when it consists of a conscious yielding of our smaller things and a withholding of our central strength. It is one thing to surrender indi-

vidual pounds; it is quite another thing to consecrate our wealth. It is one thing to build altars here and there on the road; it is quite another thing to consecrate the journey. It is one thing to be religious in spasmodic conflicts, but it is quite another thing to hallow the entire campaign. If our self is kept back from the Lord, our religion will be a procession of reluctances and irritations. Every circumstance will present a separate problem instead of being caught up in the sweep of a mighty consecration. And that is the trouble with a great many people. They try to be religious in smaller surrenders, while the great surrender has never been made. And these smaller surrenders encounter curbs and restraints, and the soul is annoyed and discordant. The large surrender brings us into God's large place. We pass into the glorious freedom of God's children, and His statutes become our songs.

XXI

THE KINDLING MINISTRY OF ZEAL

"Your zeal hath stirred very many."—2 Cor. ix. 2.

Yes, our hidden fires have deep and far-reaching influences. The power of our speech may spend itself in a day. Even our deeds may be so anæmic as to speedily exhaust their effects. But the hidden fire is always emitting its rays; it is constantly affecting the moral atmosphere, and is therefore always related to the lives of others.

What is that hidden fire? It can be clean or unclean. It can be the fire of an impure passion, such as jealousy, avarice, or lust. It can burn with the fury of destruction, and be always consuming the precious relationships of common life. Or it can be a fire pure and lucent as the sea of glass, and its constant glow can make the moral climate like an inspiring summer's day. It can be the fire of hope, stirring everybody to sacred cheer. Or it may be the fire of

love making everybody breathe the air of heaven. Yes, the fire can be kindled of heaven or kindled of hell.

These Corinthian disciples had the fire of zeal. They did nothing coldly. All the issues of their lives were hot with a passionate devotion. When they prayed aloud others were warmed at their fires. When they gave their witness others were kindled by their enthusiasm. When they moved in ways of common duty their blazing ardour encouraged the smouldering energy of others. These disciples went about lighting the fires of others.

Where had they got their fire? This is the secret: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and *with fire*." "The God that answereth by fire let Him be God."

XXII

THE LORDLY GRACE OF GIVING

"God loveth a cheerful giver."—2 Cor. ix. 7.

God loveth a cheerful giver because cheerful giving is born of love, and therefore it is a Lover loving a lover and rejoicing in the communion. Giving is the language of loving; indeed, it has no other speech. "God so *loved* that He *gave*!" Love finds its very life in giving itself away. Its only pride in possession is the joy of surrender. If love has all things it yet possesses nothing.

But we must not confine our thought to material things when we think of the grace of giving. We must get back to the fontal giving of which the gift of money is only a single issue. It is of this primary spring that James Hinton has a suggestive word: "We must make our thinking, too, a giving, an escape from the death of trying to get." That word has surely a very vital significance. Our real giving is to begin in our

thinking, and first of all in our supreme thinking, which is in our prayers. Self is to be lost when we commune with our God, and our empty place is to be filled by others. We must be cheerful givers in our intercessions, fellow-labourers with God in distributing the holy powers of grace over a needy multitude.

When a man begins to be nobly generous in his prayers, when his highest thinking is a giving and not a getting, he need have no care about his minor forms of beneficence. It will "stream from the hills and descend to the plains." When our divine communion is cheerfully sacrificial the whole of life will be an unconscious sacrifice. That is a great epitaph on Gordon's monument in St. Paul's, and it powerfully illustrates this law of genial and holy sacrifice: "He gave his strength to the weak, his sympathy to the suffering, his substance to the poor, and his heart to God." His great surrender was the offering of love, and it was made in the secret place; and out of that central giving, as streams from a fountain, there flowed all manner of radiant beneficence.

The people who have no money to give are

yet not deprived of those joys of cheerful beneficence. "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee!" And he imparted a capacity which money could never have bought. The Apostle Paul, "having nothing," longed to visit Rome, that "I may impart unto you some spiritual gift." In those supreme realms we can all be benefactors, ministers of a treasure more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold.

XXIII

COUNTERFEIT VIRTUE

"Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."—2 Cor. xi. 14.

That is our peril. When vice approaches us wearing the garb of virtue, when the wolf comes in sheep's clothing, when Satan mimics the angels of light. If temptation always came to us in its native ugliness, and we saw black death in its company, none of us would ever follow in its train. If temptation brought chains to bind us we should steadily resist its approach; but it brings garlands to crown us, and we become the victims of its charms. It comes offering life and cheer and good times, and enlargement! It bribes us with money and popularity, it entices us with visions of prosperity and triumph. And we are dazzled by the brightness, not realising that it is Satan who is decked out as an angel of light.

And, therefore, have we need of fine eyes

in order to see through the skins of things to their very hearts. We want the discernment which can see the death's-head in the proffered crown, and the poison lurking in the gleaming wine. Yes, it is imperative that we know the Tempter at his first approach. We must not offer him opportunity by our delay, or at any time give him the benefit of the doubt. We must know him as soon as he appears and begins to display his dazzling wares. We must be able to discriminate among things that differ. "Lord, that I may receive my sight!"

Now, it is just this power of moral discernment which is the gift of the Holy Spirit. He is the Quickener of our powers, and He will so discipline and refine our moral sense as to enable us to pierce every deceptive guise, and to expose the evil when it has borrowed the garments of the good. He is the Spirit of enlightenment, and in His gracious fellowship we shall not be led astray.

XXIV

THE UNSPEAKABLE SECRET

"Unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter."—2 Cor. xii. 4.

Yes, but it is only as a man has something unspeakable within him that he is able to speak with irresistible power. The "unspeakable" influences everything he says, and gives to every word the mystic suggestion of the infinite and the eternal. The man who can say everything has never very much to say. It is the nameless something, always struggling for expression, and yet never expressed, which carries the awful energy of God. It is when we have some "secret of the Lord," deeply hiding in the soul and refusing all the manifold vehicles of speech, that our speech becomes heavily weighted with the power of the Holy Ghost.

Take the unutterable secret of conversion. How much can we say about that hidden wonder? How far do the words of the apos-

tle Paul lead us into his own lonely experience? He often referred to it, but how little he unveiled! And yet that unspeakable secret speaks in everything he ever said. It makes the atmosphere of all his speech; it determines its tones, and it gives their colour and warmth to all his words. Nothing can carry the secret, but everything bears its seal. And so it was when the apostle, in one ecstatic experience, was "caught up into Paradise." All words became like broken vessels, yet the light of the glory of that experience burns in every letter he wrote in after days.

What language can tell the secret wonders in the heart of a young girl when love is just shyly awaking in the seclusion of her soul? Words are almost idle ministries in the rising glory, and yet the unspeakable secret glows and burns in everything. And so it is with a saint's love for the Lord, and with a saint's discoveries of the love of the Lord. The things are unspeakable, and yet they are always speaking, expressing themselves in graces, and adorning every issue in life with strength and loveliness. These secrets cannot be manifested, neither can they

be hid. They are unutterable, and yet there is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.

And so we must seek for the unspeakable if we would be powerful witnesses for the King. We must "take root downward if we would bear fruit upward." We must be reverently led into the secret place of the Most High, where the secret of the Lord is made known to them that fear Him. And with these tremendous experiences in our souls, things that cannot be spoken, we shall yet be manifesting their presence all the day long.

XXV

THE THORN THAT REMAINED

"I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me."—2 Cor. xii. 8.

Was the prayer answered? The Apostle was troubled by some physical ailment which drained his strength and seemed to interfere with the fruitfulness of his work. It was like a thorn in the flesh, it continually obtruded itself and mixed its pain with everything. And he prayed that God would remove the thorn, but the thorn remained. Shall we then say that the prayer was unanswered? Was the Lord heedless? Might the Apostle just as well have saved his breath? Quite other is the teaching of the Word. The unremoved thorn does not mean the unanswered prayer. God most certainly answered the prayer, but in quite another way than the Apostle dreamed. There was not less thorn, but more grace. The burden was not reduced, but the sufferer was en-

dowed with more power. "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Here is a motor-car somewhat burdened and gasping at the difficult hill. There are two ways of dealing with it. We can either lighten its load by removing part of the burden, or we can lighten its load by increasing its strength. We more than halve the hill when we double the engine power. And that is the way in which many of our prayers are answered. The answer comes not in the removal of the difficulty but in the increase of our dynamic. "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Many young Christians are bewildered to find that temptations remain even when they have begun to follow the Lord. They prayed that the temptation might be removed, or that it might no longer frown upon them as they went along the way. And yet, there it is, towering before them as they go to their work, menacing them while they are at their work, and accompanying them on their return. If only the Lord would remove all our enemies! But that is not always His way. Many times the foes remain, but the answer is found in

a table prepared "In the midst of our enemies." He gives us hidden manna, and the surrounding enemy glares at us in impotence.

And just because the difficulty and the burden remain, what an opportunity this offers for powerful witnessing. If the Lord removed all our thorns, if Christian believers had no temptations, no troubles, no difficult hills, what a poor, anæmic witness we should offer to the world! We should present a character that was faced by no enemy. We should present a life that was grappling with no problem. We should present victories without struggle! Is it not something infinitely more impressive to see a man with a thorn limping along the road with a superb spirit? Is there not something captivating in the sight of a man or woman burdened with many tribulations and yet carrying a heart as sound as a bell? Is there not something contagiously valorous in the vision of one who is greatly tempted but is more than conqueror? Is it not heartening to see some pilgrim who is broken in body but who retains the splendour of an unbroken patience? What a witness all this

offers to the endurement of God's grace! There is the man's thorn! And we are made to wonder how he bears it so well. What is his secret? Or here is a woman who has heaps of trouble; where does she get her mysterious oil which enables her spirit to burn and shine so radiantly? And those who ask such questions are led to her secret and they are brought into the presence of the Lord. And so the thorn remains in order that we may unveil the Lord. The very thorn becomes the revealer of the keeping grace of our God. "This sickness was not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of Man may be glorified."

XXVI

THE TREASURES OF DARKNESS

"I have pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake."—2 Cor. xii. 10.

This is one of the strange paradoxes of the Apostle Paul. He takes the most unlikely and unfriendly things, and he brings them into vital union. You can find them everywhere throughout his life and teachings. Words like these:—"Having nothing, yet possessing all things"; "We glory in tribulation"; "When I am weak, then am I strong." It is like the marriage of two quite opposite personalities. It is like marrying summer and winter, or midnight and noon. It is the reconciliation of things which are seemingly incompatible. And yet it is only a fulfilment in human experience of one of the beatitudes of our Lord. Did not our Lord say to His disciples, "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute

you. . . . Rejoice, and be exceeding glad." Paul is almost quoting His master in the sentence I have taken from his letter to the Corinthians; only he is quoting the word as a living experience, for in him the word has been fulfilled. "When men shall persecute you . . . rejoice, and be exceeding glad." It is the Master's word; it is the disciples' experience. This sort of joy is like the leaping of a spring in a desert waste, it is like the sound of wedding-bells in a graveyard.

The New Testament is full of the strains of this extraordinary kind of joy. Let us listen to just one of the strains. Here are two men, at one time fishermen at the lake of Galilee, and they have been witnessing to the resurrection of their Lord. And they have been arrested. And they have been scourged. And with their backs still bleeding they are going forth into the world again. Now then:—"And they departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name!" That is the Lord's beatitude in action. But where does such joy come from? Where are its springs?

This sort of song, leaping forth in the midnight, where is it born?

It surely is a very extraordinary kind of rejoicing. What do these men and women find in their dark experiences which makes them sing like nightingales in gloomy woods? Do they make any discoveries in the darkness which explains their joy? Yes, that is the secret, they have some supremely precious findings which make reproach and persecution seem like nothing. What do they discover? They have the wonderful joy of discovering God in more and more of His glory. The dark places become the home of vision. They find their eyes in the night, and they penetrate the veil of the darkness and see the Lord. Here is one of them; he is surrounded by men who hate him; they are gnashing upon him with their teeth; the stones are even now in their hands with which they will destroy him. How now? "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and *saw* the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of

God.' " That is a typical discovery of apostolic life. The blocked road is wedded to the open heavens. When the apostles are shut in by the enmities and antagonisms of men their spiritual culture becomes more intensive, and the fruits of the spirit appear in their life in amazing strength and glory.

But there is another discovery which they make in their darkness. They have the joy of discovering other souls, and winning them to the Lord. There are some folk who are only found through the medium of dark experiences. If we never suffered they would never be won. The revelation made through suffering becomes a constraint which they cannot resist. What I mean is this; we see some man's noble bearing under reproach, and the splendid testimony lays its grip upon us. A brave and radiant endurance makes conquests of many men who would be unmoved by words spoken in sunny circumstances. It is the encircling gloom which makes the testimony glorious. I verily believe that Stephen's magnificent bearing in the night laid hold of Saul of Tarsus and would not let him go. Saul never got away from it, and it coloured his thought and life

to the very end. When he himself was stoned at Lystra a young fellow was looking on, and looking on with awe-inspired admiration, and the constraint won him to the Lord. It was in the night time that Paul discovered Timothy, the strong and vital comrade in the labours of his latter years. No wonder he gloried in tribulation!

And surely it is in antagonism that we discover the joy of battle. To be hit, and yet to go at it again! Is there no deep joy in that? To be stoned in Lystra, and yet to go back again! Coming out of hospital and voluntarily going straight back to the front. With that sort of courage there goes a strange joy, and it is the joy of the Lord.

XXVII

THE MYSTIC CONTROL OF THE JOURNEY

"I went up by revelation."—GAL. ii. 2.

HERE the ministry of revelation is throwing its light upon an ordinary journey, a journey to Jerusalem. Revelation is using its rays not to illumine some great doctrine, or to disclose a panorama of hidden truth, but to light up a road. This man, Paul, has claimed that the great Revealer has opened out deep mysteries to his understanding, and has given him insight into the mind of Christ; but he now makes an even more wonderful boast in the Lord; he claims that the mystic glory will relate itself to a journey, and will determine and direct a visit to Jerusalem. "I went up by revelation."

Now we are indeed poor if we assume that we have the revealing guidance only in the larger explorations of the mind, those vast ventures through untraversed continents of sacred truth, and that we are left to the dark-

ness of our own gropings in the rough-and-tumble of everyday life. We are indeed bereft if some truth is illumined, but the immediate road we have to travel is held in the deep darkness of tropical woods. Can it be that the guiding hand fails us when we need light upon the journey?

Happily the word of promise is clear and sure. There are stars for vaster moments: there are lamps for common roads. The glory of the Lord is not alone for those who travel on great mental pilgrimages in quest of lands that are very far off; it is for that vaster multitude of pilgrims who travel between Antioch and Jerusalem, or between the little village and the great town. It is a very rich and significant promise that the glory of the Lord is to rest "upon every dwelling," and all the commonest interests of life are to be lit up in its holy rays. The Eternal Light is to "keep our feet," and the "one step" is to be under His gracious direction and control.

A man once declared that he bought a copy of Emerson "by revelation," and it brought to him bounty of fine gold? What may have been said half-jocularly has very true and

profound significance. For such is the promise and teaching of the Word. We can be led from Cæsarea to Joppa by revelation. We can choose our calling by revelation. That is to say, God's holy light will penetrate our common judgments in common things. Unto the righteous there shall arise light in the darkness and they shall know the mind of God.

XXVIII

THE SCHOOL OF GENTLENESS

"The fruit of the Spirit is . . . gentleness."
GAL. v. 22.

THEY tell us that when Lord Lister was operating in the hospital wards at Edinburgh the wards became a school of gentleness and human sympathy. One of his assistants mentions how his countenance darkened with severity when an unthinking student lifted a broken leg somewhat roughly. Everything was done with the tenderest solicitude. Even his speech was softened with unfailing considerateness. He never referred to some hospital patient as "this case," but always spoke of "this poor man" or "this poor woman." Those who laboured with the great surgeon are not likely to forget his strength, but they are even less likely to forget the gentleness which was the fruit of his strength.

Well, who can read this of Lord Lister

without thinking of the Great Physician, and his passage through the hospital wards of the common life of men? With what infinite gentleness He ministered to bruised reeds and broken hearts! What tender names He gave them! "Son!" "Daughter!" He was never rough, never brusque, never impatient, never in a hurry! His tender approach was part of the cure. His very touch had healing power. He handled the burdens of men in such a way as to immediately make them lighter. Many a broken heart was strangely comforted by His Presence even before the life had been made whole. Most surely the hospital work of our Saviour was a school of gentleness!

Have we quite learned His way? "Teach me Thy way, O Lord!" Do we know how to lift broken limbs? Do we know how to handle broken lives? Do we find more delight in denouncing sins than in helping sinners? Are we more expert in abstract analysis than in practical comfort? There is surely an almost crushing need of gentleness in days like these. Let us make no mistake about it, we are not less strong when we become gentle. Real gentleness is not

weakened strength; it is strength disciplined, purified, refined. Gentleness is matured strength. It is the full corn in the ear. Roughness has never finished its training. It needs to go to school.

And what is the school? It is the School of the Spirit. We need the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. And in that academy school-time is never over. Every new grace unveils another yet to be won. "Glories upon glories hath our God prepared!" One of the treasures of the school is the grace of gentleness. Only we do not so much acquire it, we become it. It is not a work, it is a fruit. It becomes part of our nature as we become partakers of the divine nature, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

XXIX

CRUCIFIED BY NEGLECT

"The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."—GAL. vi. 14.

THERE is a common interpretation of these words which, for lack of a certain proportion, leads to much serious misunderstanding. We are presented with the picture of a man who has been newly brought into life through Jesus Christ our Lord. In his new life he sets out with fierce aggression to fight the old life. More especially he must take a cross and go forth among his old interests and pleasures, and one by one he must nail them to the cross and crucify them. He must never go out without his cross. He must never be seen without it. At any moment some old enticement may meet him on the road, and he must immediately rear his cross and nail the thing to death. He never knows when some carnal appetite, some alien delight, may come to

his door, and therefore his cross must be always ready, and he must be watching and listening, and without the loss of a second he must have the tempting thing writhing in the throes of crucifixion. This is the presentation, and there is, of course, a sense in which it is vitally true. Every evil inclination must surely be put to death, but it may be that God's wisdom has appointed another sort of crucifixion, in which we are almost passive spectators, or, indeed, are scarcely conscious of the death scenes which are being enacted on the frontiers of our life.

The conception of a crucifixion, in which we carry a cross about, ready for any chance meeting with old pleasures, is not by any means a full portrayal of our new relation to the old fellowships in which we once found our delight. Let us look at the matter in another way. When we become alive in Christ Jesus we begin to obtain an entirely new class of interests. It would probably be more accurate to use the singular number, and to say that we become absorbed in an entirely new Interest. We pass into the magnetic constraint of a new gravitation, and our life moves toward the central sov-

ereignty of a new world. Our interest is drawn to the new Interest, even to Him by Whom we were redeemed, and Who sits upon the throne. "I, if I be lifted up, will *draw*." We are seized by that mystic spell, and our powers are lured to new engagements. Our attention is caught. Our imagination is awakened. Our love is won. "Looking unto Jesus"; that is the attitude of the soul, and that is the trend of all our spiritual movements. Our minds and hearts are set on things above.

But now, when we have got as far as this, a certain law of life is given charge concerning us, and certain things are done without our having to trouble about them. It is a law of life that when interest is enticed in one direction it is withdrawn from another. If a child's attention and interest are absorbed in some dangerous thing, say, a knife, the way to destroy the interest is by bringing a superior interest on to the field. The superior interest leads the little soul captive, and the dangerous interest dies. That is to say, in the new interest the old interests are crucified. They are really strangled by neglect. They die by being forgot-

ten. *They are left,* and they are left to die. The new interest crowds the old ones out. They are deprived of vital nourishment, and they pass away.

I might further illustrate this law by the life of a tree. I have been deeply impressed this winter by the tenacity with which old oak leaves have clung to the trees. But there was no need to worry about them or to set up any device for removing them from their place. The new sap is rising, and this positive internal power is exercising dominion, and these old associations are being pushed off their foothold and are quietly dropping into their graves. And it is even so with the new life in Christ. It rises like heavenly sap in the soul. It courses through every faculty and power. It effloresces in new interests, new discernments, new aptitudes, new passions, new modes and moods of service. And we need not trouble about old associations which may still seek to cling to our lives. They will be quietly crowded out by the new life. Old things pass away; behold, all things become new. The new life has no use for them, and they pass away.

And so it is when we become united to

Christ. In the Christian life there are some things which are no longer wanted. There are old pleasures which no longer please. There are interests which no longer interest. There is no need to crucify them. In Christ they are crucified unto us, and we unto them. We simply do not want them. They have practically ceased to be. We have got a clean palate, and the food is no longer palatable, and, therefore, no longer sweet. The new taste has killed the old delights. God "satisfies our mouth with good things," and the things of the old carnival days are forgotten.

XXX

THE UNTRAVERSED CONTINENTS

"The riches of His grace."—Eph. i. 7.

In a published letter, Thoreau, who was not always the wisest adviser, for his chords of sympathy were not very plentiful or refined, gives this admirable counsel, which has, perhaps, wider significance than he conceived: "Explore your own higher latitudes: nay, be a Columbus to whole new continents and worlds within you, opening new channels, not of trade, but of thought." There is always very grave necessity that we should be reminded of the untraversed stretches of country in our own being. There are forests which hide wonderful possibilities. There are new trails to be cut in the domain of thought and imagination which will open out vistas of light and beauty. What discernments are awaiting development! What sleeping powers, like the sleeping princesses in the old legend, are ready to spring into

vigorous life and service! Yes, there are reaches of our own being which are like higher latitudes in undiscovered country.

But I am wondering how the Apostle Paul would have given Thoreau's counsel. Paul was very objective, and his counsels of exploration would lead us away from ourselves. "Not I, but Christ!" "While we look at the things which are not seen!" "Beholding the glory of the Lord!" "Looking unto Jesus!" If the Apostle had spoken to us of higher latitudes, and bidden us be as a Columbus in whole new continents and worlds, he would have been directing us to the glories of our unclaimed inheritance in Christ Jesus. There are hidden wonders in the untrodden realm of the divine love. There are new trails to be followed through the tropical luxuriance of redeeming grace. What we have already discovered is only the finding of a single leaf as compared with boundless forests! It is only the glint of a single nugget as compared with the wealth of unfathomable mines! And therefore would the Apostle have stirred our ambitions to covet and explore these waiting treasures, for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,

neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

And the wonderful thing is that we can use our common circumstances as implements and ministers of exploration. We can use a dark circumstance to find a bright one. They say in Yorkshire, "Never a nettle without its dock!" Never a pain without there being at hand some compensating balm! Let the nettle lead you to look for the dock. Let the sting send you after the balm. Let some disappointment send you exploring for the riches of hope in Christ Jesus. Let some seeming failure stir you to gain the patience of unanswered prayer. Let some bereavement make you a zealous discoverer of the consolations of eternal life. Let your sin drive you in almost fierce quest of redeeming grace. Every circumstance may be used as an instrument of discovery, and every day we may advance more deeply into the higher latitudes of the wonderful love of God.

XXXI

WHICH IS HIS BODY

"The Church, which is His body."—Eph. i. 22, 23.

It is a deeply solemn thought, and one quick with inspiration and hope, that the Spirit of the living Christ seeks reincarnation in the fellowship of those who believe in Him. In vital reality He would be embodied in the corporate life of our own day. His Spirit would be the breath and motive of all our movements, "the very pulse of the machine." The scriptural metaphor is no remote figure of speech, dimly hinting at the wonderful possibilities of the children of men. It is literally and scrupulously true. The Word is even now seeking to become flesh. The divine Spirit is seeking and claiming human forms in which to manifest His truth and grace. And this mystic embodiment is to begin with His Church. The Church is to be to the living Christ what the human form of Jesus was two thousand

years ago. The Church is to live Christ, to express Christ, to give Christ's Spirit visibility in human life and service. The features of its face are to be the lineaments of His countenance. Every line is to be a sign, and the sign is to be rich and weighty in divine significance. The Church is to be His body, and in the Church the world is to realise the presence of the Lord, and to feel the power of His virtue and grace.

It is an overwhelming claim, and even to whisper it seems a grim presumption. But nevertheless it is true, and the truth can make us free. The embodiment may be only partial, and this because the human surrender is mean. The Lord's consecration may be full while ours is only fragmentary and broken. There may be little or no room for Him in the inn. But however incomplete is the embodiment it is nevertheless most real. The grace of the Lord Jesus can be seen in His Church. His holiness may be seen in many a stalwart virtue. His love may be seen in countless campaigns of chivalry and eagerly accepted sacrifice. Christ's pity can be felt in its compassion. His Spirit, going out after that which is lost, can be seen in

countless midnight quests, and in prolonged search upon the mountains. The Church has her failings, she has her reluctances, she has her petty meannesses, she is often wayward and indolent, and she has many sins, but whosoever will look frankly into her life will find the Presence and the goings of the Son of God. He is embodied in countless fair and strong lines of character, and every virtuous feature is the shining of His face. But our risen Lord is in His body, the Church, in order that through the Church He might become embodied in everything. That is the vast and majestic purpose of the Incarnation. He embodied Himself in humanity in order that humanity might embody Him in every human interest. In the completed work of His passion everything is to be His body. Every form of human intercourse is to be His body; His will is to be its pulse, its kindling love is to be its inspiration. Common labour is to be His body just as all His own earthly labour was His Father's business. Daily work is to be directed by His Spirit, and all its counsels and purposes are to be drawn from His wisdom. Yes, the lines of labour are to

reveal the countenance of the Lord. An Act of Parliament is to be His body; it is to be Christ's act as well as ours, and it is to do His will on earth even as it is done in heaven. Such is the process and progress of the Incarnation. It is the filling of earth's water-pots with heavenly wine. It is the seizure of all the forms and fashions of human activity, and so charging them with His Spirit that they vibrate with His life and express the riches of His truth and grace.

XXXII

THE MIDDLE WALL

"He is our peace, who hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us."—Eph. ii. 14.

Our Master was always breaking down the middle walls of partition. When we turn to the Scriptural records, and move along the highways of His life, there is a constant sound of falling walls. And they are venerable walls which are falling, walls which have stood for ages, and which have gathered to themselves the sacredness of the sanctuary. It may be helpful to turn for a moment and watch one or two places where the walls are falling. Here, then, is one instance. The Lord is sitting by Jacob's well. He is in conversation with a woman of Sychar. The disciples returned from a visit to a neighbouring village and "they marvelled that he talked with the woman, for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." Jesus went right up to that wall, and touched

it, and it fell into dust, and He opened communion with the presumed alien who had dwelt on the other side.

Here is another instance: "He is gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner." The man was a customs officer, in the unenviable service of the foreigner, and such men were ringed about by walls of most rigid exclusiveness, and religious folk would have no fellowship with them. Jesus Christ went up to the wall, and He touched it, and it vanished like a veil of mist, and He sat at meat with publicans and sinners. When this middle wall went down the onlookers were staggered at the Lord's transgression.

The disciples were frequently seeking to build new middle walls of partition. But the Lord would have none of them and He hurled them into dust. Here is one wall being built: "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbade him because he followeth not with us." It was a wall of exclusion, and the Master immediately broke it down. "He that is not against us is for us." And so all through the wonderful story the Lord is breaking the things which break the circle of human communion, and He is

enlarging human kinships and correspondences on every side.

Now these middle walls are very strongly built. I saw a church the other day whose members are wishing to enlarge it. But they are almost afraid of the task. The walls are built of stone, dressed from the lava of Vesuvius! The circumstance presents an almost fierce piece of symbolism. In human life there are volcanic eruptions of burning passion and hatred, and the issues of the eruptions are afterwards found in lava walls of cold and rigid alienation. Racial eruption and racial walls! Ecclesiastical eruption and ecclesiastical walls! And these lava-built walls seem invincible.

Some walls are already built, and they are so hoary as the great walls of China. For instance, there is the caste wall in India. There are grim ecclesiastical walls in Britain, one middle wall separating Roman Catholics from Anglicans, and another middle wall separating Anglicans from Nonconformists. These walls are of great age, and they have become almost a natural part of the religious landscape. Other middle walls are even now being built. I think I

see such a wall rising between the American people and the Japanese. And I think I see such a wall rising between Germany and Britain.[1]

It is only in Christ Jesus that these lava walls find their solvent. When Christ is fully and deeply received the walls go down. If the middle walls remain in bristling antagonism it is full proof that the reception of Christ has been lukewarm and reluctant, and He can do there no mighty works because of their unbelief. Christ is the only hope for the world. Christ can break down the grim middle walls in the world of industry. He can break down the partition walls among the classes. He can break down the dividing walls in the Church. We knock timidly at the walls, and when we hear one another's rappings we are filled with joyful hope of a new day. But the walls must go down, and they will go down when Christ is vitally in our midst.

[1] November, 1920.—Ed.

XXXIII

THE GREAT COMPANION AND HIS HOUSE

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."
EPH. iii. 17.

THE Lord dwelleth not in temples made with hands. These are homeless places, even though they may have the strength and beauty of great cathedrals. We may build these wonderful piles, and we may embellish them with all manner of architectural graces, but, if this is all, "the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." The wonderful building may be empty. And yet the heart of some poor body, living in one of the miserable little houses which so often huddle around our Cathedrals, may be a favoured spot in which all heaven is interested, for it may be all ablaze with the grace and glory of the Lord. The material surroundings matter nothing. Christ was born in a manger; He was cradled in Nazareth, and His Spirit still visits lowly conditions,

and He seeks a dwelling-place in the hearts that dwell within. He makes His home in the warm and genial intimacies of the soul.

But now let us examine this word, "dwell," and let us get at its vital significance. There is a very great difference between visiting a place and living in it. It is one thing to have a week-end in the Lake district, it is quite another thing to live there all the year round. It is one thing to offer some one "a bed for the night"; it is a very different matter to offer him a home for the rest of his life. Now Christ wants to dwell in our hearts, to settle down there, and live day and night, and all the year through, at the very centre of our life, near the very springs of all its actions and dreams. And what do we do with Him? We entertain Him for a single meal. We allow Him to pay us a visit. We give Him a lodging for the night. Yes, perhaps we put up with Him for a week-end—a Saturday till Monday visit—but on the Monday He must go. We don't arrange for Him to settle down and live with us.

All of which means that we are religious by fits and starts. Our piety is a thing of

bits and fragments. There is no continuity in our devotion. There is no settled purpose. There is no deep and unbroken communion. We have a sort of nodding acquaintance with the Lord, in a certain way we are familiar with His name, but we have no knowledge of that prolonged and vital fellowship which knits days and nights together, and which makes the weeks like moments in the year. In such broken religion there is no constancy of faith, there is no fine consistency of motive, there is no ceaseless interflow of noble affection. Things come and go. We let Christ in now and again, but we do not live with Him.

But He is wanting to dwell with us: "Abide in Me, and I in you." He wants to come into our hearts, and never go out again. And what is this heart which He seeks as His home? I do not offer any merely metaphysical or theological interpretation of it. We know perfectly well what it means to live in somebody's heart, and we know perfectly well what it means for somebody to live in ours. When we live in any one's heart it means that we are taken into the interior room of their life. We have all the priv-

ileges of "the living-room" in their house. It is the room where life moves in perfect freedom. We put off our "calling coat," and we put on our lounge coat. Everything that is stiffly ceremonial is laid aside. Intercourse is born and proceeds without any formal checks. The imports and exports of communion move in perfect freedom of trade. And then secret things come out and play. Free thought has free expression, and love flows abundantly without being conscious that it is flowing at all. This is life in the living-room. It is life in Liberty Hall.

And it is just there, in that inner room, that our Lord wants to dwell. He wants to be taken into our intimacies. He wants to be one with us in our privacies and simplicities. He wants to have a vital share in all the deep primary impulses which are the creative forces of our outer life. All this is what the Lord is seeking. But we keep Him out of the living-room. We offer Him the more formal room of our ceremonies, our cold rituals, our stiff conventions, our stated worship. We engage Him for our solemn moments, but we keep Him out of our mirth. We pay Him courtesies, but we don't play

with Him. We have grave words with Him now and again, but we do not talk freely with Him at the fireside, and in the intercourse find that life's water flows like wine. And all the time He wants to dwell with us.

How do we make our hearts a dwelling-place for the Lord? What is our part in the creation of the intimacy? What is the first thing to do? The first thing to do is to open the door, and that is an act of will. And then what? "I will come in." Is that sure? As sure as morning follows night! "Well, I will just put the room a bit in order and then I'll lift the latch and let Him in!" Nay, but that is a deadly mistake. That is seeking salvation by works. It is trying to do the Saviour's work, and before we let the Saviour in. If we can prepare our hearts for Him we can really do without Him. The gospel of grace is this—we must open the door upon our neglected and disorderly room, with all its marks of riot and rebellion. And the great Guest Himself will take control. He will prepare the room for His own habitation. And our part is what? To let Him do it!

There is, I think, a classical usage of the

word which is translated "dwell," and it means to govern, or to administer. This may not be in the New Testament content of the word, but it is certainly in the New Testament gospel. When we let the great Friend into our life He begins to administer our affairs. The Guest becomes the Housekeeper, and He arranges things which are beyond both our strength and understanding. And what again is our part? To let Him do it! To hand everything over to Him in deep, quiet, constant trust. It is ours to surrender the living-room to the Lord. And when I have done that I shall be able to say with the Apostle Paul, "I live, yet not I, Christ liveth in me."

XXXIV

INCAPABLE OF FEELING

"Past feeling."—Eph. iv. 19.

That is a condition of most deadly impoverishment. To be incapable of noble emotion! I do not limit the impoverishment to incapacity of sorrow, and still less to the inability to shed tears. There is often very deep feeling where tears are never seen. There is a dry type of emotion, and it is often most poignant and profound. Bishop Westcott once said that God had denied him the helpful enduement of tears. And yet everybody knows that he was gifted with most sensitive sympathies, and he bore the griefs and carried the sorrows of all the countryside. Tears are not always the symbols of fine emotion, and their absence does not mean that there are no tidal movements of feeling in the depths of the heart. Indeed, the feeling may be all the more fervent because it is denied the expression of tears.

But at present I am thinking of the moral condition, when the capital of noble feeling begins to shrink, and the man is brought into a state of emotional bankruptcy. For instance, there is the fine feeling which registers the distinction between right and wrong. It is not so much a mental discernment as a moral sense. It is a kind of spiritual palate which tests and discriminates the moral qualities of moods and actions. Indeed, the patriarch Job used this very figure of speech when he asked, "Cannot my palate discern perverse things?" He knew the perversity by its taste. He detected and loathed it, as the physical palate detects and rejects tainted food. But this fine palate can lose its power of discernment. We can abuse it. We can drug it. We can stupefy it until it becomes numb. Let an expert tea-taster defile his mouth with some strong alcoholic stimulant and his power of discrimination is lost. All teas taste alike, the good, the bad, and the indifferent, and he is incompetent to appreciate the delicate flavours of the excellent. And let a man drench his moral palate with strong doses of disobedience, and it will speedily lose its refinement,

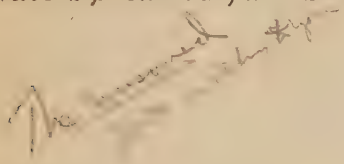
first of all becoming incapable of relishing the superlative things, and then mingling good and bad together in a common insensitiveness. The soul becomes past feeling.

It is even so with every kind of noble emotion which is purposed to be a safe director amid all the mixed and perplexing values of life. Our power of common sympathy is intended to be an extra sense by which we are to perceive the joys and griefs of our fellows. We are to taste the waters of their life, and according as they are sweet or bitter we are to weep with them that weep and rejoice with them that rejoice. But we can neglect our sympathies. We can pay them no attention. We can refuse to give them expression, and expression is the very oxygen by which alone they can survive. Deny the oxygen and they are smothered. They first become drowsy, and then they become numb. The soul is past feeling.

And pre-eminently is all this true of the noblest sense of the soul, our feeling for God. We cannot define this sense. We cannot describe it. It is "a sense sublime of Something far more deeply interfused." It is the feeling of a Presence. In the Chris-

tian life it is the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. And this holy sense can be drugged. Sin does it. Prayerlessness does it. Carelessness does it. Who is there among Christian believers who has not known how some unforgiven sin has clouded his sense of God the whole day long?

But it is the glory of our great Saviour that He can vitalise benumbed senses. He can restore withered limbs. He can raise the dead. He can break the bonds of sealed springs. "For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert."



XXXV

THE WATCHFUL USE OF OPPORTUNITY

"Redeeming the time."—Eph. v. 16.

The disciple of Christ is to be an expert merchant in the commodity of time. He is to be always engaged in "buying up opportunity." He is to allow no one to be the peer of the Master's servant. His vigilance must never sleep, and he must never be away from the market. Every moment must be bought up for the King, and used in the service of His Kingdom.

And therefore the disciple will be busy buying in seasons both grave and gay. He will not allow the evil one to buy any of the brighter seasons for his own infernal purpose. Seasons of merriment will be purchased for the Lord; bright moments of wit and humour will be gained for Him. This will never mean that merriment will lose its sparkle; it will really mean that sunlight will be added to common daylight, because

the merriment will shine with the very lustre and purity of the love of Christ. All wit will be perfectly clean and therefore translucent, containing nothing which darkens or defiles. Gaiety will become the most intimate friend of sanctity and will be the possession of the Lord.

And the watchful merchant will also buy up the darker seasons for his Lord. He will not allow his moments of disappointment, or sickness, or adversity, to be owned and used by the devil. He will rather claim that the black seasons may be used for the home of Christ, and he will accordingly bring them and offer them to His service. A dark house, with the Lord in it, becomes a temple of ineffable fellowship.

But in all these purchasings everything goes to the early buyer. To be first in the market must be our constant aim. Let us regard every moment as precious treasure, and before the enemy of our souls can lay his hand upon it let us be up and buy it for the Lord.

XXXVI

VOCAL THERAPY

"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."—EPH. v. 18-19.

IN two of his letters the Apostle Paul recommends the ministry of singing to his fellow-Christians. It is not, perhaps, the sort of counsel we should expect from this robust and intellectual apostle. We scarcely imagine the gift of song as part of our conception of his marvellous equipment. We do not think of him singing as he climbs from the Cilician plains into the cold, biting air of the Taurus mountains. But why not? It is probable that we get very much nearer to a true image of the man if we think of him toiling along his exacting roads in the mood of song. The man who broke into singing at midnight in the prison of Philippi, when a few hours before he had been beaten with Roman thongs, has a very active

sort of minstrelsy in his soul, and it would wake into music at the lightest touch of events.

At any rate, he strongly urges the use of singing as one of the inspiring helps in the spiritual life. In his letter to the Ephesians he recommends it as a substitute for wine! "Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit . . . singing and making melody in your hearts." He counsels his readers not to seek their stimulus through the body, but through the spirit, not by the quickening of the flesh, but by the exaltation of the soul. If they seek spiritual stimulus they will have less need of material stimulant; the more of song, the less of wine! And who has not known the inspiration of song? Who has not known the stale flatness of some depressing scene lifted away by the ministry of song?

> "Sometimes a light surprises
> The Christian *while he sings.*"

Yes, and when the light breaks upon the soul, like some shaft of sunshine breaking through on a cloudy day, the bird is apt to

sing all the more, with the result that twilight passes into glorious day.

The Apostle Paul makes a second reference to this precious ministry in his letter to the Colossians, where he teaches that counsel and even admonition can be best conveyed "in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." There is something very attractive about this sort of admonition, but one does not often meet it. The apostle seems to suggest that a soul must be touched to sweetest harmonies before it is fitted to administer reproof. All our own discords must be removed before we are competent to create concord in the soul of another. For what can there be that is truly healing and creative in any word which is born in a heart that is "like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh"? But if a soul is full of harmonies, singing with grace unto the Lord, even its admonitions find a ready entrance into the lives of others, and are ministers of health and healing.

Those whom we call experts in the devotional life are almost in perfect agreement as to the helpful ministry of singing in their devotions. What riches of singing there are

in the Psalms! "I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord;" "I will sing aloud of Thy mercies." William Law insists that even in private devotions the Psalms should always be sung. "For singing is as much the proper use of a psalm as devout supplication is the proper form of prayer; and a psalm only read is very much like a prayer that is only looked over." There is nothing that so "awakes all that is good and holy within you, calling your spirits to their proper duty, setting you in your best posture towards heaven, and tuning all the powers of your soul to worship and adoration." And this testimony of William Law is corroborated in the experience of multitudes of saints.

Sir Frederick Mott gave an admirable lecture some time ago to a society which bears the attractive name of "The Vocal Therapy Society." He told a fascinating story of how music is now being used in the ministry of healing. At the Maudesley Hospital it has passed far beyond the experimental stage, and is in confident and constant practice. It is being used in nervous disorders, and in restoring mental powers to ex-Serv-

ice men. The distracted consciousness is being led back into unity and peace. Lost memory is being recovered. The holy, healing Spirit of God is brooding over the stricken spirits of men and is restoring their broken estate through the seductive and mollifying ministry of music and song.

Is this a neglected gift in the aspiring life of the soul? It may be that just here many a one will find the magic secret which gives wings to leaden feet and changes weariness into strength. And perhaps it would be best to try the secret when we do not feel like trying it at all. "How can we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land?" Ah, and that is just the place wherein to sing them! They give an amazing gift to the exiled spirit, and they bring the air and fragrance of home to streets and ways on foreign shores.

XXXVII

TAKING ONE'S STAND

"Stand therefore."—EPH. vi. 14.

THERE are some people who never seem to take a stand. They are always changing their ground. You never know where you have them! They shift, and they budge, and they slip, and they slide. Life is just a dodging of difficulties and never a magnificent facing of the foe. In these high and critical matters the folk who yield an inch will soon surrender a mile. They are swayed by loose opinions and not by fixed convictions. Or perhaps they are moved by sentiments and not by ideals. A comfortable feeling is more to be desired than a holy war. Indeed, they do not know anything important enough to warrant the shedding of their blood. To them there is nothing more precious than quietness. Emblazoned on their dainty, picnic banner is the legend, "Anything for a quiet life!" And "anything" means indefi-

nite surrender. While on Jesus' blood-red banner are the burning words, "Anything for a right life!" And "anything" means not only the yielding of comfort, but even the offering up of life itself! It is the people who never take their stand who tend to emasculate the strength of a nation; and it is the same people who are accountable for any softness in the militant Church of Christ.

King Charles' soldiers said of George Fox, "He is as stiff as a tree and as pure as a bell!" It was a magnificent eulogy. George Fox could not be bent or twisted by the fiercest and most cruel antagonisms. His enemies tried it in a score of prisons. They could beat and bruise and harm his body, but they could not move his soul from its loyalty to the Lord. He would not swerve. He had taken his stand. He was immovable. Yes, indeed he was "as stiff as a tree," one of the trees of the Lord, the planting of the Lord that He might be glorified.

Now George Fox's noble stiffness was the companion of a radiant purity. Perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that the stiffness was more than the companion of the purity; it was its child. He was stiff as

a tree just because he was as pure as a bell. Purity always breeds strength. Impurity always breeds weakness. When disloyalty steals into our souls the energy begins to leak from our wills. We stand not in the truth when there is no truth in us. When the truth is in us we are the unbribable foes of all iniquity. "His strength was as the strength of ten, because his heart was pure."

And, therefore, the way to make character more steadfast is by making it more pure. It becomes stable as it becomes clean. We are washed into strength! The blood from Immanuel's veins rids us of both defilement and indifference. The grace which makes the saint makes the hero too. Yes, when we have knelt for cleansing we shall take our stand against the foe. "He hath washed us from our sins and made us kings!"

XXXVIII

THE GRACE OF READINESS

"Have your feet shod with the preparedness of the gospel of peace."—EPH. vi. 15.

THESE are surely the feet of a herald, shod for swift and ready movement. This is a cheery courier, bright in his alertness, prompt and eager to carry abroad the good news of redeeming grace. He is like a man whose feet are nimble, whose shoes are exactly the right size and shape; fitting him like a glove, giving him comfort and freedom, enabling him to stride out on any road, and to walk all day without fagging. Is there anything more harassing, more embarrassing than ill-fitting shoes, or shoes that are loosely tied? Is there anything more wearying than shoes that pinch and cripple you? They add dead weight to all your movement. But to have just the right shoes, wedded to your feet in perfect union —they almost add wings to your feet. And this is the simile which is used to describe

the feet of the herald of the Lord. There is to be a comfort and a nimbleness about his feet, a preparedness and readiness of movement, an immediateness and a swiftness which will make him spring to the call of his Master, and speed upon his errand along any road and not stumble.

Such is the man who is now before us—a winged-footed man, ready for any charge. The sudden call finds him ready for the road. "How soon can you be ready?" said Mr. Gladstone to General Gordon, when he proposed to send him to the Soudan. "I am ready now," answered Gordon. His feet were shod with preparedness. In my Church in New York I saw sixty or seventy Salvation Army officers receive their commissions for home and foreign service. Not one of them had any idea where the command would send him, whether to a New York slum, or to the slopes of the Rockies, or to the hinterland of Brazil, or to a crowded city in Japan. But they all stood in readiness, eager for their going, and as they received their commission they welcomed it with a salute, with a joyful "Hallelujah," or "Praise the Lord." Their feet

were shod with the preparedness of the gospel of peace.

It may be helpful to look at one or two of this type of herald as they are revealed to us in the Word of God. Here, then, is one of them, "As much as in me is I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are in Rome also." Great cities had a peculiar fascination for the Apostle Paul. He had a passion for their strategic centres. He coveted and courted them as the meeting-places of many roads, and he could send his gospel news up these great diverging roads to the ends of the world. Whenever a call came to him from a great city it stirred him like the sound of a trumpet. On the other hand, if he heard the trumpet calling to some smaller and quieter place he was shod in readiness for the journey, and the little place became to him the centre of the universe. And even when he went to big cities he was ready to join little fellowships. He was ready to go to Philippi, and when he got to Philippi he was ready to join a little company of women who met by the river-side to pray. Wherever the trumpet sounded his feet were ready for the road. Always ready!

I do not wonder that at the end of life's long day his feet were still shod with the same grace, and that he faced the last bit of rough, dark road with this splendid confidence, "I am now ready to be offered."

Here is another Scriptural word which reveals the herald of the Lord: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!" Surely it is the swiftness of the herald that is here so beautiful! The wearied folk in the city were watching every road on the mountain for the coming of the herald. Their eyes were strained with watching. But at length the herald appeared, and his very speed filled them with hope and cheer. No one would run as he was running unless he brought good news. A bringer of bad news would have fallen lame, or he would loiter; he would hang back in his depression, and he would defer his sad tale. But the man of good news would be breathless in the speed of his coming. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!" Such a herald half tells his story before he arrives. His speed is part of his evangel. Who does not know such

people? If we are in trouble they are at our door almost before we have made a cry. "How soon you got here! However have you come?" The secret is here—their feet were shod with the readiness of the gospel of peace. Thrice blessed are they whose very speed is part of the message of grace.

One more glimpse of these "Aye, ready!" folk. Here is one who is described as "ready to every good work." That man wears fine shoes. They fit splendidly. They are good for any road, and, like the shoes which the three sisters showed Christian in the House Beautiful, "they never wear out." What lovely characters they are, these folk who are ready for any bit of work! They are not choosers of prominent places; they love the quieter posts just as well. If an outstanding mission falls to their lot they are ready. If it is an obscure bit of work they are just as ready. If there's any gap to fill, "ask Mrs. . . . she's always ready!" If there's a stretch of humdrum road to trudge, "ask Mr. . . . he is always ready!" Yes, the world owes nearly all its comfort and blessedness, under Christ, to those whose feet are shod with the preparedness of the gospel of peace.

XXXIX

BENEFICENT RESISTANCES

"The things which happened unto me have turned out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel."

PHIL. i. 12.

WHAT are "these things"? They are antagonisms which have seemingly checked and broken the apostle's ministry. His enemies have pursued him relentlessly, and he is now a captive awaiting trial in Rome. The greatest missionary of his day is apparently silenced. This mighty itinerant for his Lord is now a prisoner. His one passion is denied expression. Was he inclined to murmur? Was he impatient with his restraints? Was he touched with depression? Was there any reaction in his enthusiastic spirit? I think that here and there one can see signs of a bewilderment which might easily have become resentment. I think that discouragement sometimes visited the heart of the great apostle. He thought his work

was being injured, and therefore his spirit was bruised.

But in Rome he remade the discovery which he had often made before. He discovered that behind all the malicious and mischievous cunning of men there is an even more subtle Worker bringing the malice and mischief to nought. "The things which happened unto me have turned out!" It is a very suggestive phrase. He was expecting these things to go one way, and lo and behold they have turned quite another way. It is as though some unseen hand had hold of things, and man-chosen purposes were turned completely round. He was expecting only unfriendly issues to his imprisonment, and now issues are appearing which are bright and gladdening. He expected only bitter things, and here are things of surpassing sweetness. Yes, "out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." He could imagine nothing but that the gospel would be hindered, and here it was being furthered by the very means which seemed to set it at nought.

What had the antagonisms accomplished? There was one thing they had done which

Paul would never have recognised. Indeed, if such a suggestion had been made to him he would have repelled it, as once before he had repelled eulogy and adoration at Iconium. *They had revealed the strength and splendour of his virtues.* Paul could never see his virtues, but his companions did. He knew not that his face shone, but they marvelled at the radiance. His virtues trooped out in greater glory as the menace deepened in its gloom. His loyalty to his Lord, his fortitude, his endurance, his indomitable patience, his unbroken faith! All these began to shine with a brightness which his friends had never seen before. He surpassed himself daily. They thought they had known him in other days, but this was a new revelation of their friend and leader.

And what happened? Fire kindled fire. Paul's virtues quickened their confidence. His courage destroyed their fears. As they gazed upon him their own hearts were steeled against persecution and outrage. They imbibed his spirit and in their liberty they carried about the same virtues which he displayed in bondage. "Many of the brethren of the Lord, waxing confident by

my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

Dear soul! he imagined that their extra zeal was born out of pity for him, born of a sympathetic remembrance of their imprisoned chief. But it was not his bonds nor his sufferings which nerved them; it was the virtues he displayed in his bonds. They were energised and vitalised by the great splendour of this imprisoned eagle. The mighty strength of the captive overwhelmed them, and their souls were stirred in kindred chivalry! Because he was faithful they became fearless. Because he held out they went on. Because he triumphed over his resistances they marched forth to meet their own antagonisms with victorious song. And that is what always happens when we face our resistances in steady loyalty to Christ. The very gloom of our circumstances becomes a foil for our faithfulness. Our witness becomes all the more impressive. It is like a white seagull crossing a bank of dark cloud. It is like some rare jewel whose radiance is more deeply displayed by a background of dark plush. The blackness shows off the stars. Our resistances set our dis-

cipleship in more impressive relief, and they become the unintentioned ministers of the divine grace.

Another thing which our stern resistances do for us is this: *they greaten and invigorate the conscience.* Southern airs relax: northern airs are tonics. Soft and easy circumstances tend to make everything soft and flabby. And conscience itself can become weak. Its voice may shrink to a faint whisper, like the voice of a man who is dying. Its authority may pass away like the authority of a king who has lost his throne. But opposing circumstances act like a bracing challenge. A chilling reception may have all the effect of a cold bath. Conscience puts on strength to meet the menace. Our finer loyalties stiffen in the face of fierce attack. Paul's moral sense, his power to grasp and define moral issues, were never more vigorous than when he was encircled in imprisoning resistance. Nay, his discernments were disciplined; in bad, foggy weather he developed better eyes. "The things which happened unto him" turned out to be the servants of moral and spiritual vision.

One other thing may be said about

the unexpected friendliness of unfriendly things. *Its resistances make existence venerable.* There is something wonderful about a face which has known great sorrow and gone through it as some splendid liner weathers a tempest. Every lineament in the face is a line of strength and grace. Life attracts to itself some of the reverence which we give to an old cathedral. We have only to contrast all this with a life which has known no resistance and we shall see a face devoid of that profound significance which touches the observer with mingled admiration and awe. Paul's very appearance was venerable, and it inspired veneration, and his companions moved in his presence as though they were treading cathedral floors.

XL

THE CONTAGION OF HEALTH

"Waxing confident by my bonds."—PHIL. i. 14.

I HAD rather assumed that Paul's bonds would have filled his companions with fear. I thought that his imprisonment would have been a menace which would have stricken their souls with terror. But the prisoner eclipsed his prison. His courage was more obtrusive than his chains. His fellowship with the Lord was more manifest than his bondage to a Roman soldier. His light shone in the darkness, and the darkness was unable to quench it. And "many of the brethren of the Lord," coming into this bright, inspiring atmosphere, felt the quickening of the Apostle's triumph, and were "much more bold to speak the word without fear." The time of another man's constraint was the season of their enlargement.

There is a contagion of health. Our ordinary thought and speech have made us

more familiar with the contagion of disease. We are busy thinking about hostile microbes and bacteria, and the havoc which they work upon "the earthly house of this tabernacle." And we think of the unfriendly bacteria which assail the soul—evil suggestion, irreverence, unworthy fear, frivolity. But there is healthy contagion, soul influencing soul with strengthening and inspiring ministries. Every noble virtue is the base of a splendid contagion. Paul's courage invigorates the apostolic fellowship.

Think of the contagion of serenity. How magnificent is the calming influence of one strong man in the initial stages of panic. How quieting is the self-possession of one strong woman in the day when calamity has riven the family circle. Or think of the contagion of hope. How all our smouldering lamps borrow fresh supplies of oil from the vessel of the thoughtful optimist. Or think of the contagion of perseverance. One man's quiet, unmurmuring tenacity changes the heart of many a deserter and sends him back to his post. Yes, graces have their inevitable influences as well as vices. Health is as contagious as disease.

And the vital contagion can be born in obscure ministers. The sacrificial patience of Onesiphorus inspired the Apostle Paul. And I wonder how much of his inveterate youthfulness the Apostle owed to the presence of youthful Timothy, his own son in the faith. Every soul can be the centre of contagious health. Every one in Christ Jesus can help to create the spirit and atmosphere of the city of our God.

XLI

THE RESOURCES OF A GREAT APOSTLE

"For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."—PHIL. i. 19.

IT is good to be permitted to turn into a strong man's life and to examine his resources. It is a great privilege to be allowed to look into his treasury from which he gets his current coin to meet the urgent demand of circumstances. And that is our privilege with the Apostle Paul. Here is the great apostle in captivity in Rome. The greatest of all itinerant missionaries is now in bonds. He has roamed at large on enterprising ventures in the cause of the Kingdom of God. He has trudged through Asia Minor and through lands still more remote. He has crossed icy-cold mountains and fever-haunted plains. He has been a torch-bearer for the Kingdom of Light, and genial fires have been kindled in every place in which he has ministered. And now he is in bonds.

The missionary is a captive. The torch-bearer is confined. It looks as if his work is over. But no! To this man the imprisonment of the body is not the paralysis of the soul. Even a blind alley may be a mystic thoroughfare. A chain may be the witness of a nobler freedom. A prison may be the birthplace of heavenly springs. That is his faith, and on what does he rely? "I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayers and the supply of the spirit of Christ."

And so the Apostle finds a gracious part of his resources in the prayers of others. And so it comes to pass that apparent weaklings can be the companions of mighty warriors. That is how the man with one talent can be the invisible helpmeet of the man with ten. Even a child can bring succour to the Apostle Paul. This is the supreme application of the old fable—the mouse can liberate the lion. We can, by prayer, liberate the powers of great men and women, and make them mighty masters of difficult circumstances. We can, by prayer, impart to them a sovereignty by which they are able to handle circumstances and turn them to be

ministers of salvation, to the glory of the Saviour's name. I can, by prayer, become as a part of another man, and I can go forth with him to his battles and his conquests. I can travel through Mongolia with James Gilmour, and I can help him to be light-hearted in the midst of appalling tasks. I can be part of a statesman's personality when he is fighting some great iniquity, or championing the children of oppression. I can be a great companion of some mighty preacher when he stands in the pulpit, and I can multiply his resources when he proclaims the Word of Life. Yes, I can, by prayer, league myself with another, and I can be a mighty helpmeet in giving him conquest over circumstances so as to make them the ministers of salvation. In this way Onesimus can be a part of Paul, Aquila can be a part of Apollos, and any child can be a part of any great campaigner in the warfare of the Kingdom of God.

Prayer is the appointed means by which rivers of energy are unsealed and directed to some crying needs. And therefore vital prayer is not a word, it is an act. It is as much an act as the waterman's lifting of a

sluice-gate which lets the higher waters into the lock where the waters are low. Prayer prepares the ways for the supply of the Spirit of Jesus, and in that holy energy we have the power which overmatches and conquers difficulties which are otherwise invincible.

XLII

NOT SCARED!

"In nothing terrified by your adversaries."
PHIL. i. 28.

THE Apostle takes his metaphor from a very sharp and vivid action. It is the figure of a startled horse shying at something which is only half seen, or which is mistaken for something else. And the horse is thrown into confusion, and into consequent peril of accident or disaster. And the Apostle sees a similar peril in the Christian life. As we journey along the road we may encounter apparently fearful presences which may break up our serenity, causing us to shy from our appointed goings, and plunge into danger of moral disaster. In panic we may lose our treasure. But the Apostle does not merely suggest the danger; he tells us how we can be so prepared, and so strengthened and quieted, that we shall go along the most menacing road with confidence, "in nothing scared by our adversaries."

One of the most troublesome things on the way of life is the thing that is only partially seen. We do not see all round it. We are like Christian when he was climbing the hill Difficulty; we see the lions, but we do not see the chains which bind them. We can see the menace afar off, but we do not see the defensive grace until we get quite near. That is a very frequent experience. The temptation begins to loom before us, and we do not see a way of escape. The almost certain loss stares upon us, but we cannot see the provision for recovery. Apollyon straddles across the way, and we cannot see any sign of the promised Friend. The enemy seems to have done everything! Our Friend seems to have done nothing. And we shy! We halt! Perhaps we turn! And it is for just such emergencies that the great Apostle gives us his counsel. "Do not be scared," he says. Forward! The threat is not the entire circumstance, as you will discover by continuing your journey! Keep quiet! Look straight ahead, and go on! When you get a little nearer you shall find that the lions are chained. There is cold water on this side the wall! There is the

oil of inexhaustible grace on the other. "As thy day so shall thy strength be!"

There is another very troublesome thing in life. We mistake something for something else. The mist is about it, and its outlines are exaggerated, and in form and proportions it assumes the shape of a menace. I was once walking along the Northumberland coast on a very foggy day when there loomed before me the figure of a gigantic lion. When I got nearer it turned out to be a church! I have often had such surprises in the experiences of the soul. The menace in the mist has proved to be the sanctuary of the Lord. We misinterpreted the lions, and we made a threat out of the house of grace. A form appears on the deep in the uncertain night, and we are afraid, and we say, "It is a spirit." "And Jesus answered, It is I, be not afraid!"

"He that believeth shall not make haste." He shall not be urged into feverish haste. There shall be no panic. He shall not shy at the apparent antagonism. He shall be endowed with coolness and with calm. "Said I not unto thee that, if thou wilt believe, thou shalt see the glory of God!"

XLIII

THE CAPACITY FOR SYMPATHY

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."—PHIL. ii. 4.

PAROCHIAL vision is never true. If my eyes are confined within the circle of my own things I shall misread the values of life, and I shall become the victim of sore delusion. It is in the petty self-circle that evil prejudices are born, and cruel asperities, and these always constitute a spiritual fog which destroys the accuracy of all our judgments. And just here we come upon a very subtle irony in the law of life. A man who steadily refuses to look sympathetically upon "the things of others" can never really see his own. He may think that he does, but that is only one aspect of his delusion. We can only get our true vision by exercising our sight in the welfare of our brother. That is to say, a vital part of our moral equipment is buried in our neighbour's field. We refine

and purify our lenses in another man's affairs. Selfishness never gets beyond fragments; sympathy makes us whole. A selfish man sees nothing truly; he has not found his eyes.

Now the larger life is not gained in a day. We cannot leap into a healthful and helpful regard for the things of others. True sympathy is a very delicate and exquisite spiritual ministry. We may so easily bruise where we intend to serve. We can be brusque in our interest, and awkward and clumsy in our attention. Nothing demands so tender, and therefore so firm and sure, a touch as the fingering of a soul, and if we are to do it helpfully we require powers of the rarest refinement. For instance, we need a well-schooled and disciplined imagination. We need to know what is going on behind stone walls. We need to be able to pierce forced laughter and find behind it a well of tears, to get at the back of seeming frivolity and find a weary, breaking heart.

And then, too—we need disciplined emotions—healthy, tender, responsive. For we are to weep with them that weep, and to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and no

shallow and conventional sentiment will suffice. We are to be able to thrill to the shy, awaking mood of the soul which is just falling in love with Christ; and we are to feel the gathering chill of a love that is growing old and cold in the years. Where can we get these needed powers with which to look upon the things of others? We can get them in reverent and purposeful prayer to Him who has promised to give.

XLIV

ENERGETIC CHARACTER

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."—PHIL. ii. 12-13.

THERE is certainly nothing passive, nothing indolent in the religious life of the Apostle Paul. His stillness is not laziness, neither is it the quiescence of a log. It is rather the stillness of the central depths of mighty seas. There is a profound inner calm at the ocean's heart, but the calmness is associated with movement, even tidal movement, and the onrushing strength of the breaking wave. And energy is one of the most impressive and startling characteristics of the Apostle Paul. He is like his Master, and virtue is always going out of him. And virtue is always going out of him because it is always being born in him. The stream flows on because the spring is never dry.

Look at the great passage which I have quoted from the letter to the Philippians.

Three times is energy named. The entire passage pulsates with energy. There is energy in expression because there is energy in reception. Energy is worked out because it is first worked in. "Work out your own salvation . . . for it is God which worketh in you." It suggests to me the analogy of a diver working away at the bottom of the sea; he gives out energy because the life-breath is conveyed to him by friendly allies who are working on the surface of the waters above him. In a very vital sense the diver is being constantly born from above. And so it was with the Apostle Paul. His life abounded in energy because he drew his breath in fear of the Lord. If one may reverently say it, human endeavour was made possible because of the divine travail. He was a fellow-labourer with God.

And so the energy of the great Apostle was one of the living witnesses to the faith which was in him. The energy was manifold. There was the energy of love. He radiated it everywhere. But the love was a really vital energy. It was not like the soft, languorous air of Lotus-land which inclines to sleep, but it was like the tonic air of the

Alps which stirs to athletic effort and mountaineering. Yes, Paul's love-energy was quickening mountain air, and it moved the hearts of men to chivalrous tasks. And then, again, it was the energy of heroism. It displayed itself in great and splendid ventures, and in fearless journeys down new roads of thought and service. Paul waxed valiant in fight. And there was the energy of joy. There are many kinds of joy which lessen our stature. We shrink in such delights. They relax our fibre and reduce our moral height. But the joy of Paul was energy which made mountains sink to molehills. He rose above his tasks, for "the joy of the Lord was his strength."

Such are three forms of energy expressed in the life of the Apostle Paul. Love and joy and heroism abounded in every service all along the road. The energy was poured out because it was first poured in. Paul was in communion with the central dynamic. His life was hid with Christ in God.

XLV

REPUDIATED ESTATES

"What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."—PHIL. iii. 7.

I REMEMBER reading some years ago an article by a very able and suggestive writer, in which he said that in the Utopia which he had imagined the really alive inhabitants are busy repudiating their old possessions, and handing them over to the State as cumbersome things which they no longer desire to carry, as they have found some other things which are infinitely better. They are surrendering their estates, and getting rid of their moneys and all sorts of burdensome property, because they have found the love of beauty, and a quiet happiness which is not dependent on these things, and good health, and good temper. I like to recall this Utopia. I like to picture the folk urgently busy getting rid of things which they have devoted every ounce of strength to secure. "Away you go! I don't want you any

more!" They are repudiating estates which for years have been their very life.

But does not this writer's suggestion expose one of the most common of all delusions? We are all busy getting estates of one kind or another which, in a big and truly healthy life, would be regarded as encumbrances, obstructing and hiding other things of infinitely superior worth. Or, to change my figure, do we not get very hot and feverish, and often very, very tired, gathering mere husks, baskets and baskets of them, while the real kernels of things are forgotten and ignored? We go for the big things rather than the great things; that is to say, we go for the showy things rather than the vital things; we must have things that look well rather than things that are essentially true.

For instance, we are far more concerned about a good living than a good life. What purpose and what energy we put into our pursuit of a good living! And how eagerly we add one thing to another! Every gain becomes the basis of another venture. Our granaries are bursting; very well then, we will pull them down and build greater. There is no end to our acquisitiveness, and

it all has to do with things. Sometimes we get a glimpse of our folly, but it is only like a stray gleam of sunshine in a monotonously grey day; it shines for an instant and is soon forgotten. We are often heard to say, "When I'm fifty-five, or at most sixty, I'm going to pull up a bit." That is to say, at fifty-five or sixty we are going to begin to live! But common experience teaches that fifty-five comes along, and sixty is reached, but the "pulling-up" does not take place. The impetus begotten in the years cannot be stayed. They are in the power of a tyrant, and he demands and exacts his tribute. "Drive on," he says. The victims esteem themselves to be free while all the time they are slaves. They go on piling up things, piling up things! And all the time the best things are being overlooked and ignored. There are the truly beautiful things which death can never blight. There are the truly happy moods whose songs go on through the night. There are restful dispositions. There is spiritual serenity. There is spiritual harmony. And far away, above and beyond all these, there is the wonderful and intimate companionship of God! All overlooked because we prefer things. "All these

things will I give thee, if thou wilt surrender all the rest!" And we close with the offer. "Thou fool!" It is the word of Christ.

There are others who are far more concerned about a big reputation than a rich and noble character. Again it must be said that they covet the big thing, not the great thing. They want "to be seen of men." They are ambitious for "the uppermost seats at feasts." They are eager for titles and honours. They are hungry for applause. And all these things are but the husks of life. And when these feverish seekers have got them, at the end of the days they have nothing but husks. And all the best things have been left by the wayside. These poor souls have treasured the husks, and thrown away the kernels. They are hugging the caskets, and throwing the pearls into the road. They have repudiated "the Pearl of great price."

Why not have a repudiation service, and put all secondary things in their place? Why not have a repudiation service in which first things shall be made supreme? We can enter that Utopia now, and its name is the Kingdom of God.

XLVI

DRAWING A CROSS

"That I may know Him and the fellowship of His sufferings."—PHIL. iii. 10.

IN the later days of the war, when America had only just come into the conflict, there were grave difficulties of transport. Only a limited number of American troops could cross the Atlantic. There was a certain company from which a draft was to be taken. Every man in the company was keen to go, but only a few could be taken. Who should the few be? They decided to cast lots. A number of papers were put into a hat, just as many as there were men, and crosses were put on some of the papers, and every man who drew a cross was to go to France. One boy wrote to his father, and this line was in the letter, "If ever I prayed in my life I prayed to-day that I might draw a cross." The spirit of this American boy, and the symbolism in which the passion was en-

shrined, seems to me to express the spiritual ambition of the Apostle Paul. He was always eager to draw a cross. He had a passion to fill up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ. Even when he prayed for the enlargement and enrichment of his spiritual resources his prayer was always linked with the further ambition of sharing the sufferings of the Lord. Watch him on this great roadway of spiritual aspiration, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection!" But he does not end there. To stop there would be to seek to fill his own treasury without any desire to flow over into the deep, craving necessities of others. It would be greediness for gain, and the shutting out of pain. His gain would be not only unearned increment, for our spiritual gain is always that, but uninvested increment. And so the Apostle relates his intense desire to know Christ with the further eagerness to enter into practical fellowship with His Cross. "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings." It is there he draws a cross. He wants to use his spiritual resources to explore the deeper secrets of re-

demption, and this in an experimental life which shares the passion of the cross.

It is even so with Simon Peter. His letters glow with eagerness to share the glory of divine communion. But he wishes not only to know the secrets of the light, but the mysteries of the night. He would ever draw a cross. In his letters the word "partaker" occurs at least three times, and the varieties of its usage are very significant. "Partakers of the glory!" The first and last would be maimed without the second. The second is a kind of roadway between the first and third. Through the sufferings to vital glory! Let any one read the first letter of Peter, and he will see and feel the Apostle's burning eagerness to draw a cross. He did not wish to reach his end by any short cut through By-path Meadow. He wanted the way of the cross.

Many of us are more intensely concerned to draw the lucky-bags of life than to draw its crosses. We would dearly like to sit with Christ on His right hand or His left hand in His kingdom, but we shrink from the cup that He drank of, and the baptism wherewith He was baptised. And yet the real

joy is in drawing the cross and following the Saviour. In one of the riots in China, Griffith John received a blow on his head. He put his hand up to the wound, then looked at it, and there was blood. He says that when he saw the blood, the first blood he ever shed for Jesus Christ, he was filled with an extraordinary exultation in the spirit. He knew the joy of the Lord. In the cross he found his crown.

XLVII

THE DISTANT SCENE AND THE NEXT STEP

"I follow after . . . I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."
PHIL. iii. 14.

I THINK I know perfectly well what John Henry Newman meant in the familiar lines

"I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me."

The sun has gone down, darkness has fallen over the world. The roads lose themselves in the gloom. No moon is in the sky, no stars. I have just a lamp in my hand, and it throws its friendly light about my feet, and I can see the next step, and then the next, but I can see nothing beyond. That is Newman's symbolism, and in this symbolism his vital concerns are expressed. His world is filled with confusion. Reason has no clear landscape. There are no long, open roads of definite comprehension. He does not see how things are going to emerge. He cannot

discern a way out. Clouds and darkness are round about him. But he silences his clamorous spirit. He draws it back from its struggles with the night. He realises the strain of trying to peer into things which are concealed. "I do not ask to see the distant scene!" And yet he would not sit down and become inactive. He would not be passive until the darkness lifted, when he might continue his journey through the landscape filled with light. Even though there is gloom in front of him he would keep on moving, ever moving! "Keep Thou my feet." Even though the darkness enfold me let me continue walking! One step at a time! "One step enough for me."

That is something of Newman's meaning, and the movement of his spirit is clear. And yet I have always some reluctance, some slight check of hesitancy, when I sing the line, "I do not ask to see the distant scene!" "I do not ask!" And yet I am afraid I often do. At any rate I ask that the goal may shine through the gloom and that the slow journey may be cheered by the thought of destination. But, then, probably Newman would do all this, and his soul would

keep the end in view even when the darkness was thick upon the intermediate road. Because the distant scene has so much to do with the next step. If there be some light ahead, even though it be only a gleam from a cottage window, it gives direction and inspiration to one's steps.

I remember I was once appointed to preach at Saddleworth. It was a "supply" on our college list. I stayed with an old farmer. After the afternoon service I put up at his house until the time of the evening train. And the darkness fell; and the quiet day turned to a very stormy night, and soon the rutty roads were living streams. When the time for my train was getting near my friend gave me a farm lantern, "just to help you to see where you are going, and to keep you out o' the ditch!" Well, that was something, but he added something that made it better. "Do you see that glimmer of light yonder?" "No, where?" And then he trained my eyes to catch a far-off gleam that looked miles away. "That is Saddleworth Station; make for that!" The two things gave me what I needed. The old, worn lamp gave me light for my feet, and each step

became clear, and that glimmer of the distant scene gave me cheer and appointed the course of my journey.

And this surely is something like what the Apostle Paul had upon the way of his troubled and stormy life. There was always something shining through the gloom and confusion, even "the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." His imagination was always lit up with the splendour of the goal. His eyes were never empty of light. The goal was never separated from his steps. It inspired every step he took. You can see it in the story of his life, and in his own account of his spiritual moods and movements. "That light yonder!" He never missed it, and he never lost it. "I follow on if that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus." His eyes were bright with the light of destiny. That which was distant brought a glory to that which was near.

And so the Apostle followed on to the next step because of the continued inspiration he found in the goal. He drew reserves from the distance and they gave spring and buoyancy to his feet. Indeed, it may be said that

he took the very next step in a sort of association with the final step. The ultimate was wedded to the immediate. He practised walking in the golden streets even while his feet were still on the flinty roads. That is the wonderful thing about God's shining goals. They come out to meet you. They are like the mysterious island in "Peter Pan"—we go out to seek the island, and we discover that the island is out seeking us.

There are many people who take the next step badly just because they have no distant scene. Nay, there are many folk who have no next step because they have no home. It is all right about your next step when you have home to go to, and you are on your way home. But to have no home, to be a vagrant, to have "nowhere to go"—well, there is no next step which marks the line of an increasing purpose, the highway of a growing progress and attainment.

And one further word about the ministry of the distant scene. It is the feeling for the distant that so often reveals what the next step is to be. We discipline and refine our sense of the immediate by our fellowship with that which is far away. Our eyes ac-

quire a keenness and we discover an increased power of discernment. And so there is something profitable in star gazing! It strengthens the eyes for the nearer tasks. It is more than likely that we shall increase our common sense by enlarging our spiritual sense, and that our immediate duties will become clear in the light of the ultimate vision. "In Thy light shall we see light." "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a guide unto my path."

XLVIII

THE TEST OF TENDENCY

"I press toward the mark."—PHIL. iii. 14.

THAT is the primary matter—where are we tending? For, after all, we are always tending somewhere. Life is never stationary. We are always in motion. The choice is not offered to us as to whether we will move or not move. We are bound to move; we are all the children of tendency, and the direction is left to the decision of the personal will.

Now the main tendency of a life is revealed in its apparently smaller concerns, as well as in the greater. A straw shows the direction of the current. Our dominant trend can be inferred from our trifles. Our leading ambition is manifest in everything. Everything is carried in the primary enthusiasm, as the loose things on a railway track are caught in the rush and sweep of a passing train. In a truly consecrated life

even "the bells upon the horses are holiness unto the Lord." The Apostle Paul swept his tent-making into the common passion of his devotion to the Lord. His very salutations became part of his worship, and dull conventionalities burned with the altar-fires of God. He had his mark, and that mark settled the trend of everything.

It is imperative, therefore, if we would be in the Apostle's fellowship, to determine our trend, and we determine our trend when we have chosen our mark. In our life we either drift or steer. To what shall we steer? What shall be our haven? What shall be our goal? What is the choice of the great Apostle? "I press toward the mark, for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus!" The Apostle chose what the good Lord had chosen for him. It was his holy ambition to apprehend that for which he had been apprehended by Christ Jesus. The Lord had called him to holiness, to a perfected salvation, to the liberty of the glory of the children of God!

And the Apostle's "mark" was an upward calling. Once he surrenders himself to the mark everything in his life will feel the

power of the heavenly gravitation. Our mark is always our magnet. If it is the Lord who is "lifted up," He will draw everything in our life unto Him. Ordinary conversation will have the savour of divine communion. Common work will have something of the life and elevation of worship. Even in our many bewilderments we shall be moving surely toward the light. Let us choose our mark, "The high calling of Jesus," and our life, in all its strangely mingled experiences, will have one trend, one goal, one final glory.

XLIX

THE PATRIOTISM OF THE SOUL

"Our citizenship is in Heaven."—PHIL. iii. 20.

AND that is our true country. And our relationship to it constitutes our highest patriotism. All other forms of patriotism must bow to this, and from this they must borrow their spirit and their aims. When the earthly citizenship is out of harmony with the heavenly citizenship it becomes a minister of moral discord and disaster. Indeed, patriotism which is harshly divorced from the heavenly citizenship is only a deadly form of selfishness, and it is creative of unlimited bitterness and strife. But the local patriotism which is pervaded by the large inspiration of the heavens is as beautiful as some local rose bush which has breathed in the wider air of Devonshire or in the golden climate of California. In these matters everything depends upon relationship. Our patriotism can be of the earth earthy; or it

can be nourished by the atmosphere of Heaven.

The patriotism of the soul finds its spirit in Heaven. Its temperament and temper are pure and warm and genial. It is like unto "a sea of glass mingled with fire." There is nothing dark about it, nothing harsh and exclusive. Its sense of the individual welfare is governed by the larger interests of the family. Its service of man is done in the spirit of humanity. Its citizenship is of the world, and it seeks the blessedness of the world for which Christ died. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Our patriotism is a minister of divine health when it is infused with the sacrificial spirit of the Lord.

The patriotism of the soul finds its ideals in Heaven. Our Master approached everything from the loftiest standpoint. "I am from above." And therefore He brought the things from above to the things that are below. He brought the heavenly type to the earthly commonplace. And that is the counsel which is given to His followers in His Word. "See that thou make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the

Mount." The ideal of the upper world is to determine the movement of the lower world. That is an essential part of all healthy patriotism. Our eyes are to be filled with the light of the heavenly vision when we set ourselves to an earthly task. When we are beginning to reconstruct society, or to build a wall that is in ruins, we are to have before our minds "the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven from God." That is the governing standard of the heavenly citizenship. So long as that vision fills our minds and hearts, we cannot possibly build into our structures anything that is hay or wood or stubble, and still less anything that is rotten or unclean.

And the patriotism of the soul finds its noblest franchises in Heaven. No book more fervently exults in freedom than the New Testament. It proclaims the essential freedom without which all other professed freedoms are only clever forms of bondage. We may sing about freedom when the only thing which has happened has been that the shackles have been taken from our limbs. But a man may lose the outer chains and yet remain in most debasing bonds. It is pos-

sible that a man who is singing songs of liberty may be feasting upon the husks of freedom. But when we have the heavenly franchise the soul rejoices in the real thing, in the glory of the liberty of the children of God. When we are free with the freedom of the heavenly citizenship our soul has found her wings. She has been made free in Truth. Nay, she has been freed by Him who is the Truth. She has the liberty of the divine Sonship and rejoices in the sacred intimacy of the Father's house.

L

THE KNIGHTS OF THE RED CROSS

"Other my fellow labourers whose names are in the book of life."—PHIL. iv. 3.

THESE are noble knights who have left no written biography. Even their names are not blazoned in any visible scroll. They just went away on a chivalrous errand, and shed their blood in a royal service, and nobly lived, and bravely died. They belong to the brilliant élite of the rank and file, whose heroism has no earthly herald, but whose courage and sacrifice win great fame in the courts of heaven and throughout the city of our God. All they seek is a place of service, and they are unconcerned about its being a place of honour; they aspire after travail rather than applause; the greatest task presents the most coveted office; and the emblem of their life is not a trumpeter but a quiet cross. Indeed, in the very best and deepest sense of the word, they belong to the dis-

tinguished company of the Red Cross Society.

The world has always been deeply in debt to these Knights of the Red Cross. Their blood is the seed of the Church. Nay, it is through their hallowed sacrifices that the race renews its youth. We may not know the ministers of our restoration any more than the man who was healed wist that his Healer was Jesus. But the blood of their sacrifice gets into our veins like hallowed fire, and in our limbs there is born the possibility of heroic deeds. Sacrificial blood is never like spilt milk, a futile waste and beyond recovery. Sacrificial blood is never shed like the intermittent rains which fall on desert sands. The blood is the life, and when it is given away in lavish surrender to a noble cause it is directed by the holy Lord Himself into the anæmic veins of the race. In this profound sense death has immediate resurrection.

Life which culminates in sacrifice has reached its appointed goal. We are given our life in order that we may learn how to lay it down. School is over when that lesson is perfected. A young fellow who lays down

his life for others at the age of twenty-one has died in maturity and is ready for promotion. Selfish people are infants even though they are three-score years and ten: martyrs are full-grown even though they are only in their teens. School is over! "Come up higher!"

LI

THE WITNESS OF DIFFICULT ENTERPRISE

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."—PHIL. iv. 13.

THE Christian believer is to give witness of his communion with Christ by his ability to do difficult things. The power of the resurrection must be attested in chivalrous enterprise. There must be a certain quiet and sunny assurance in doing impossible things. It must be given naturally, spontaneously, unconsciously, and with all the quietness with which a strongly engined motor-car takes a precipitous hill. To a sixty-horse-power motor a stiff gradient does not exist. To a soul which is strengthened with the grace which is in Christ Jesus impossibilities are wiped out. "I can do all things in Christ."

John Smith, of Harrow, the man whose sacrificial piety has left such a firm seal upon hundreds of Harrovians, was once speaking of some display of moral courage to an old pupil, who remarked: "That was very diffi-

cult. I wonder he could do it." "Difficult?" answered John Smith—"Difficult? He was a Christian!" That is the apostolic tone, as that is the apostolic spirit. The apostles faced the changing road in the faith that they had sufficient equipment for every encounter, and that every frowning difficulty would be only a privileged opportunity for additional conquest. Difficulty became an occasion for the unlocking of larger resources in the unsearchable riches of Christ. And so every difficulty came to be interrupted as a promise, and the promise was always redeemed. Where difficulty abounded grace did much more abound.

The world is always arrested by the quiet and splendid achievement of difficult things. To see sorrow borne with hopeful courage, to see prosperity worn with thoughtful tenderness, to see disappointment met with sweetness, to see the long, uncertain day endured with patience, to see personal injuries received in unrevenging meekness, to see kindness in the garish day, and to hear songs in the night—all these make the world stand still and wonder. Thus do our very difficulties become the missionaries of redeeming grace.

LII

A GARDEN IN THE GLOOM

"I have all things and abound."—PHIL. iv. 18.

IN one of my garden books there is a chapter with a very arresting heading, "Flowers that grow in the gloom." It deals with those patches in a garden which never catch the sunlight, the dull corners which at no part of the day are found with shining faces. And my guide tells me the sort of flowers which are not afraid of these dingy corners, nay, rather like them and flourish in them. There are plants which seem to thrive in apparent adversity. Where others would be pinched for lack of warmth and cheer these draw nourishment and stimulant from severity. It must be a fascinating thing to watch the growth of flowers which have a preference for the gloom. These flowers would not lift their heads to the meridian sun; they are children of the shadow, and they are wooed by the twilight and the shade.

And there are similar things in the world of the spirit. They only reveal themselves in hard circumstances. They come out when material circumstances become stern and severe. They grow in the gloom. For how can we otherwise explain some of the experiences of the Apostle Paul? Here he is in captivity at Rome. The supreme mission of his life appears to be broken. His missionary career is ended. He has no longer the stimulus of travel, the joy of his sublime itinerary, the joy of carrying the good news of grace over the highways and byways of Asia and Greece. The open road is narrowed down to servitude. Gloom has settled upon his lot, but it is just in this besetting dinginess that flowers begin to show their faces in bright and fascinating glory. He may have seen them before, growing on the open road, but never as they now appeared in incomparable strength and beauty. Words of promise opened out their treasures as he had never seen them before. They were now like the expanded fulness of a rose as compared with the imprisoned mystery of the bud. Even Providence itself revealed new intimacies in his penury, and he discovered

deepening wonders in the fellowship. There was a flower named Recollection which never unfolded such treasures in the sunlight as it now revealed in the gloom. Forgotten mercies reappeared, and in such a way as to disclose new aspects of heavenly grace. And, strangely enough, the flower called Hope flourished in amazing luxuriance; the apostle named it "the Hope of Glory." And Human Kindnesses, which once were perhaps seen but dimly, were now clothed in loveliness. Perhaps the kindness showed itself in a visit from Onesimus, a runaway slave, or perhaps in some tender remembrance from friends at Philippi or Corinth. In one way or other the gloomy season became the home of spiritual graces, and the dingy corner inspired the most wonderful experiences of his life.

But of all the things which revealed themselves in this period of gloom there were none which compared with what the apostle called "the unsearchable riches of Christ." These riches revealed themselves in amazing brilliance, like the brightness of the stars on nights when there is no moon in the sky. And among these treasures were such won-

derful things as the grace of Christ, and the love of Christ, and the joy of Christ, and the peace of Christ, and it seemed as though they almost needed an "encircling gloom" to draw out their secret and their inner glory. At any rate the realm of gloom became the home of revelation, and Paul began to realise as never before the range and wealth of his spiritual inheritance. And so while some of his friends were referring to his misery he was singing of his joy; while they spoke of his tribulation he exulted in "a peace which passeth understanding"; while they piteously regretted his poverty he boasted of "possessing all things." "I have all things and abound!"

Some men become very poor when they are imprisoned in tight corners. When we reach the desert places in life the great question is this: "What have we got to live on?" And our means consist very largely of our savings and our storings. This man Paul had been laying up treasures in Heaven, and these treasures befriended and comforted him in his gloom. There are some folk, who, when they get old, or when they come to lonely places, have a dismal and wintry lot.

They live with very cheerless associates. Their own animosities crowd about them. They live with their own peevishness, and their sourness, and their fretfulness, and their censoriousness, and their unthankfulness, and their little-mindedness! What a menagerie of ugly things! And yet in multitudes of lives they constitute the only company when the sun goes down, and the cold evening wind blows about them, and they are left alone.

On the other hand, who has not known men and women who when they arrive at seasons of gloom and solitude put on strength and hopefulness like a robe? They have lovely things to live with. They have their own old loyalties. They have sweet memories which come freighted with rich cargoes from far-off years. They have large sympathies which keep them young, and which preserve their leaf from withering. They have sunny alluring visions. And far more wonderful than all these, in their humble lot there comes another Bethlehem, in which the Lord of Glory incarnates himself in hallowing power and peace.

You may imprison such folk where you

please, you shut up their treasure with them. You cannot shut it out. You may make their material lot a desert, but the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the rose.

LIII

THE PLACE OF UNVEILING

"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."—Col. i. 10.

First of all we see a pilgrim on a journey, keeping to the appointed path with vigilant fidelity. Then we see his spirit illumined as by some mystical dawn. An inward light appears "which keeps the way before him always bright." He enters into a fuller knowledge of God. And the great matter to notice is this—the revelation comes to him on the road. The holy light meets the traveller. We do not talk ourselves into the knowledge of the Lord; we walk into it. We start out for something, we venture upon some errand, we accept some commission of Christian service, and the enlightening ministry joins us on the road, and we become light in the Lord. "Light is sown for the righteous," and they reap the shining harvest as they go along the way. We "walk

worthy of the Lord," and we thereby "increase in the knowledge of God." Yes, we walk into the larger day.

But there are great differences in the walkers, and therefore there are great differences in the measures of their spiritual knowledge and enlightenment. Mr. Fearing and Valiant-for-Truth were both on the same road, and they were going in the same direction, but what a contrast in the style of their walking! Valiant-for-Truth had a fine stride as he swung along the road in purpose and song. Mr. Fearing was nervous and tremulous, uncertain about the Lord's promises, and uncertain about the divine provision. The character of our walk has much to do with our enlightenment. Valiant-for-Truth was on the look-out for opportunities of service. His road was to him an unending series of possible doors. Mr. Fearing was looking for traps, and snares, and pit-falls! And so while Valiant-for-Truth stepped forward into an ever-brightening dawn, Mr. Fearing trudged along in perpetual twilight.

But if we are to walk into the light, our walk must not only be one of obedience;

it must be one of communion. We must not only walk in love, we must walk with God. And in this traveling companionship we can both speak and listen. We must neither be deaf nor dumb. The great Companion, who walked with the two disciples to Emmaus, listened to them as they told him their disappointments and fears; and they listened to Him as He talked with them by the way. As they walked and talked their hearts began to glow with a strange burning. "Did not our hearts burn within us?" And then the burning changed into a shining, and they knew Him; He was made known unto them in the breaking of bread. Walk and know!

LIV

THE POWER OF DARKNESS

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness."—Col. i. 13.

In his book, *Polar Travel*, Admiral Peary makes a very striking statement on the greatest trial in Arctic exploration. He says that whereas to nine out of ten people the word "polar" is synonymous with cold, to one who has spent a year within the Arctic or Antarctic it is more likely to be synonymous with darkness. "A man of the most sanguine temperament cannot avoid entirely the effects of months of polar night, and there are those of a nervous temperament whom a night in the Arctic would drive insane."

There are other zones beside the Arctic where the power of darkness is appalling. If the darkness be unrelieved, a long nighttime in the soul can break a life to pieces. Indeed, that is a phrase which we frequently use to describe the condition of people whose

sorrow clings about them like a heavy night without a star, and without a friendly glint of coming dawn. We say they are "going all to pieces!" Their finer faculties become anæmic; they whiten and sicken like plants imprisoned in a dark cellar. Their emotions become burdensome weights when they were purposed to be wings. They are weighed down when they should be lifted up. Sweet things in the soul turn sour, like a room which is shut up from light and air. The whole life loses its healthy balance and fine proportions, and all because the darkness has deprived it of the sense of space and far horizons.

I think that one of the great perils of the present time is in this paralysing power of darkness. The world is full of sorrows. Millions are walking in the gloomy shadow of death, or in the almost equally oppressive gloom of the fear of death. The terrible gusts of our day are blowing out many friendly lights! How, then, shall it be with the darkness? Shall it be a hostile darkness which induces spiritual paralysis, or shall it be a strangely pervaded darkness which is the servant of a sovereign hope and peace?

There is here a great call for the saving ministries of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Never was the believer in Christ more privileged with opportunities of service. It is our ministry, in Christ Jesus, "to give light to them that sit in darkness." We are called to go here and there as lamplighters on dark roads. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!" We are to retell the old story of redeeming love and grace. We are to tell it with quiet confidence as those who know and believe it. And it is amazing what one can do, who has the assurance of faith, in steadying doubtful and trembling hearts! It is amazing what one confident soul can do among a whole shipful of panic-stricken folk when he quietly says, "Sirs, be of good cheer, I believe God!" The watchman on the mountain, with his good news of breaking day, gives heart to everybody in the darkened vale. "In Thy light have we seen light."

LV

SHADOW AND SUBSTANCE

"Which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is Christ."—Col. ii. 17.

Professor William James, in a glowing eulogy of Miss Jane Addams, used the phrase, "She inhabits reality." He meant, I suppose, that she does not spend her energies in merely vaporous enterprises. Her life is not frittered away in one prolonged dream about things. She is not always about to do something: she gets things done. She is not satisfied to merely study the railway time-table as to how places can be reached: she makes the journey. She is not for ever theorising in seclusion about humanity: she gets among men and women. She does not live and move in a phantom world, a filmy kingdom of abstractions: she inhabits reality.

This eulogistic phrase, which Professor James so uses about Jane Addams, may

wisely be given a more inclusive application. In the urgent concerns of religion, how prone we are to live in the shadows, and not in the substances of things! We remain in the unsatisfying phantoms: we do not abide in reality. We do not pass through the shadow into the substance. For, in the realm of religion, material things are the shadows. The visible and the tangible and the transient thoroughfares lead into the glorious temple of the Unseen, the holy sanctuary of the real and eternal. We take the bread and the wine at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but the material emblems are only the shadows of the heavenly feast. If our journeying soul tarry with these we do not inhabit reality, we are in the realm of phantoms, however seemingly impressive the service may be. The substance is Christ, and it is only as our soul reverently presses forward to the spiritual bread and wine that we pass into the august realities of the Sacrament. And so it is with all external ministries, and with every ecclesiastical and devotional ordinance and institution. We must distinguish between the shadow and the sub-

stance, or leanness will come into our souls.

Indeed, in the only truly vital sense of the words, we never inhabit reality until we abide in Christ. And yet, how we do dwell in the shadows, and how we pursue them! But when at last we do enter into our Dwelling-place, there is a strange and wonderful sense of home. It is not that our quest is ended when we make our home in the Lord: it has only just begun. We are at rest for quest; we are like mineral explorers who have found the precious location, and who have just sunk their shaft into the buried wealth. We too have found our Mine, and there stretch before us the endless veins of the unsearchable riches of Christ. We have discovered Reality. Everything else is a shadow—this alone is Substance. "Thou, O Christ, art all I want!"[2]

LVI

LIFE IN THE HEIGHTS

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above."—Col. iii. 1.

This chapter in Colossians, which begins in this exalted communion, ends in describing the Christian life of a slave. I think it was Spurgeon who used to say that the chapter begins in the heavenlies and ends in the kitchen. But it is not so much the wide sweep of the thought which is so startling as the fact that the thought never descends. The heavenly places and the kitchen are at the same elevation. The apostle did not come down from the mount to talk about employers and employed. He was still in "Christ Jesus," and all these human fellowships were regarded in the lofty relationship of the Lord. All earthly interests were lifted up into the heavenlies; everything was adjusted in divine communion, and so everything became one of the things which are above.

And so it happens that Paul's evangelical life is not at one height and his practical life at another. We sometimes divide his letters into the doctrinal and the practical, and we regard the doctrinal as mountainous alpine country, while the practical life finds a meaner symbol in the valleys and the plains. I do not think that this symbolism expresses either the Apostle's thought or feeling. He gets up into the high mountains even when he is dealing with a matter of seemingly comparative indifference. In his letter to the Corinthians, and after the magnificent unveilings of the fifteenth chapter, we are confronted with the sudden transition, "Now as touching the collection!" But that is not a precipitous descent, it is only a sharp turning on mountain heights, keeping the same elevation. The Apostle does not say, "Now to leave these great themes, and to descend to something practical! I am very sorry, but we must attend to these material things! We cannot at the shrine remain!" No, that was not his reasoning. The common life was raised to the height of the resurrection-life in Christ. An ordinary collection

formed part of the retinue of the glorious ministries of redemption, and shared the power of the resurrection.

We are never vitally right, and we never enter into robust spiritual life, until we have something of this magnificent inclusiveness, and make everything part of the glorious mountain-country of the risen life in Christ our Lord. We must regard the lowly concerns of our daily walk and conversation as being vitally related to the heavenlies, and we must daringly believe that we can discharge the humblest duty while still breathing the air of the mountain-tops.

LVII

UNLEARNING THINGS

"Put ye off all these."—Col. iii. 8.

But this is a tremendous business, the putting off of things! There is nothing more difficult. What can be thought of which is more difficult than to drop a way of thinking, or to alter a way of speaking, or to change a way of acting? How difficult it is to put off something which has become a habit! How severe is the task of taking some way, which has become one of life's grooves and smoothing it out until there is no mark that it has ever been! When we have learned a wrong way of doing a thing it is a fearfully heavy business to unlearn it. For instance, when we have learned a wrong way of using our voice, what a business it is to unlearn it! How difficult is the task, when a young violinist has acquired a wrong pose of the wrist, to undo the twist and to get the right one!

How severe is the business of unlearning the wrong way of handling a golf club! These are all biases and inclinations of the body and it is a difficult thing to put them away. But the difficulty becomes enormously greater when the false thing is mental, or emotional, a perversity of mind or of mood. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." Forsaking a false habit in golf is as nothing to forsaking a false habit of the soul. But just because it is so very difficult it is a ministry which serves our health and strength. It makes moral muscle, and clothes the spirit with heavenly vigour.

Dr. Horace Bushnell had a very dear friend, Dr. Dutton, whose gracious frankness was a vital part of his worth. In one of his letters this sentence occurs: "Indeed, I have thought of late that you have made decided improvement in what Willis calls unlearning contempt." Yes, and such unlearning would be a fine register of the progress of the soul. To be unlearning an unhealthy accomplishment in contempt, and to unwind its bondage as one would unwind

a spool of thread, is a moral exercise which would reveal itself in an emancipating influence over the entire life.

And it is even so with the habit of censoriousness, even when it is not so matured as to have become soured into cynicism. The habit of supercilious criticism, of judging everybody as from a throne, issuing severe judgments in tones of final decree—no task in our schooldays presents the difficulty which we encounter when we begin to unlearn habits like these. Indeed, it is something like taking a closely woven fabric and unravelling it so as to pick out the rotten threads. Unlearning is the most difficult of all learning.

The apostle has this in mind when he offers us the counsel, "Put ye off all these." It is the figure of the removal of a garment, and if it were as easy as throwing off a loose Oriental robe we should have no trouble. But in life the garments of the soul have the intimacy and tenacity of skins, and to remove them is like peeling away a vital texture. But, by the wonderful grace of God, this putting off of deadly things is not altogether a negative act, like

the removal of a garment. Indeed, what is negative is a secondary thing, and it follows what is positive. We have first to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." The figure is almost fiercely Oriental, but we know what it means. We can point to periods in our life when we put on a friendship, when we began to wear the love of a man or a woman, and we were clad in power like a robe. And by faith we can put on the Lord Jesus so that our whole life is covered by Him, as though some Oriental garment were flowing around us, and we were wrapped in its folds from head to feet. We can become clothed in His holiness, His grace, His love, His strength. We can become invested with these things in marvellous completeness. "He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness and with the garment of salvation."

And it is when we have "put on the new man" that we can set to work to "put off the old man." When we have begun to learn of Him we can begin to unlearn the things we ought never to have learned. The two things go together. We can work

out our own salvation because God worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. We can unlearn contempt, and every other vicious thing, as we take His yoke upon us and learn of Him.

LVIII

THE INDWELLING WORD

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."
Col. iii. 16.

First of all, let us literally carry out the Apostle's counsel. Let us go among the words of the Lord Jesus exploring for the word. For the treasure which we are seeking is described in the singular number—it is "the word"; and the hiding-place of the word is described in the plural number, "the words." The words offer us a varied field for exploration, and the object of our quest is the essential word which is hidden in their depth. To be an explorer in this field is not merely to be busy with the words, reading them with diligence, or committing them to memory. That would be as if I were to bury myself among a gathered pile of purses, feeling their material, tracing their patterns, observing the grace and novelty of their designs, and yet never opening them to find the treasure

which may be hiding in the secret pocket. It would be as if I were to handle a pile of oyster shells, turning them over and over, noting their shapes and their individual lines and features, and yet never to open them in quest of a possible pearl. I am to go among the words of Christ looking for the word which is the pearl of great price.

And this cannot be done hurriedly. We cannot rush through a chapter of words, and come out of it laden with the word. It is the reward of patient and leisurely movement. I very well remember Dr. Joseph Parker advising me in my early ministry never to "gallop" through the Scriptures. "Go slowly, and look around!" What do motorists see of the wayside flowers when they are scorching along at thirty or forty miles an hour? And what do they hear of the songs of birds, or what do they see of the movements of the shy, graceful things which only venture out when everything is quiet and still? The "word" is the surprise which is given to the soul which moves with reverent and unhasty steps. If we rush along we shall miss it.

Sometimes the word is hidden in a parable, and I am to find the living thing cradled in folds and garments of deftest imagery. And sometimes the word is concealed in words which the Master spoke to another, and I am to listen with a sort of over-listening, a kind of eager eavesdropping, to see if there is anything meant for me. Sometimes the word is veiled in a work. Some deed of the Master's is a medium of revelation. Or it may be only a look or an attitude or a gesture—and the word I am seeking is to be found in their inner significance. Sometimes the word is conveyed in a disciple's letter, a letter written to the Romans, or to the Ephesians, or to a few folk at Colossæ or at Philippi, and I am to read it very carefully, reading also between the lines, if perchance I may find the abiding truth which is the light of the ages, and which is the lamp for the doings and goings of our own day. In all these many fields the treasure is hid, and if I am to find it the Master says I must have all my wits about me. I am to be as alert as a merchantman. I am to be as wakeful and busy as a speculator who has

found a treasure in a field and who gives himself no rest until he has made a purchase and the land is his. It is in this spirit and with this passion I am to go in search of the "word of Christ."

And I am to let the word of Christ *"dwell"* in me. The word is not to be a transient thing, going in at one ear and out of the other, like a caller who just stays for an hour and then continues his journey. This word is to dwell with us, to settle down with us to make its home in the inner room of the soul. It is to live with us in the privacies of our being where our own word is born, and where our own words take life and shape and quality. And the word of Christ is to dwell there as a mentor, as a monitor, nay, as a creator, determining my word, and my words, and my work, and so fashioning their very virtue and expression that they will reincarnate the life and spirit of the Lord. The divine word is to dwell within me so as to make the tenant divine.

And the word is to dwell within me *"richly."* It is not to be on the same level with other things, one of a fellowship of

commoners who belong to the same rank. It is to be of an altogether different degree and quality. It is to be like some superb and royal presence, moving with authority and grace. The word of the Lord is to dwell in the soul with rich and rare distinction. And just because the word is so exalted, just because it is so rich and glorious it enriches everything it touches with something of its own distinction. This is the real philosopher's stone; it transforms everything into spiritual gold. It endows everything with divine quality—our thoughts, our wishes, our affections, our purposes, our actions—it touches everything into gold.

When Charles Kingsley was first married, and set up a home, he and his wife sought out all the words in the New Testament which in any way declared the Lord's will about masters and servants. How should they treat their servants? What should be the manner of their relationship? What said the word? And so they sought in the words and found the word, and the word of the Lord dwelt in them richly. It got into the kitchen, and it changed ordi-

nary severities into gracious courtesies, it transformed harshness into gentleness, and cold reserves into tender and enduring intimacies. And perhaps it would be no surprise to my readers to learn that when Charles Kingsley died, all the servants in the house had lived with him through periods ranging from seventeen to twenty-six years!

LIX

SPIRITUAL DISTINCTION

"Let your speech be always with grace."
COL. iv. 6.

IN the apostle's word the counsel is limited to the ministry of speech. But in truth it has a much wider application, and is so inclusive as to comprehend all the issues of our life. All the active expressions of the soul, whether of speech, or of looks, or of gesture, or of demeanour, or manners, or deed, are to be distinguished by a certain heavenly grace which is to bear witness that we are in alliance with the Lord of grace and glory. In the ranks of genuine aristocracy there is an air of fine breeding, displayed in unconsciousness and in natural ease, which tells the story of birth and high lineage. And in a far more distinguished sense the Christian is to reveal a grace, which is one of the marks of the Lord Jesus, and which endows all the expressions

of his life with an indefinable but most attractive charm. It is one of the birthmarks of the highest aristocracy, that lofty fellowship which is "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Let us see how this grace is revealed. I suppose that, of all difficult things, one of the most difficult is to be a graceful loser. Even in the comparatively small matter of games it is a very fine distinction to be able to lose with grace. But, indeed, to lose anything, and yet visibly retain the grace of the Lord Jesus, reveals a wonderfully arresting character, and the compelling charm is all the greater as the things we lose excel in value. To lose money and not lose one's grace is a noble attainment. To lose health, and to keep the grace of the Lord Jesus, is nobler still. To lose our loved ones, and in our dull bereavement to retain the holy grace like starlight in the night—that is surely the noblest of all. Yes, the people who can be graceful losers are marked with great distinction. They must evidently belong to the spiritual aristocracy.

And yet there is, perhaps, something higher still. A friend writing of Lord Elcho, who was killed in Egypt, gives this very impressive testimony: "He achieved the infinitely exacting rôle of *felicitous winner* incomparably well." That is a great phrase, and it is a great eulogium on the young soldier to whom warfare was a holy crusade. He was a felicitous winner! His finest triumphs were carried with a still finer grace. Everybody else shares in such triumphs; we feel they are ours as much as his. Some winners are very unattractive. Their success makes them proud, and pride is always exclusive, and no one wants to come near their fire. They have it all to themselves. But it is a very beautiful thing, and it is a commanding witness, when success of any kind does not mar us, and we are unspoilt by "the destruction that wasteth at noonday." When grace thus abounds in all the issues of our life the people who deal with us begin to inquire about our fountains, and they are led to the eternal spring, even to "the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

LX

THE GIFT OF SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

"Those who have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."—HEB. v. 14.

THERE are grades of spiritual discernment. There are undisciplined senses which can detect only presumptuous sins and have no perception of secret faults. They can apprehend the sin which lodges in some glaring crime, but they cannot appreciate the sin which hides in the spirit of an age. At one of the Royal Society's meetings Mr. Astor exhibited a micro-balance, all built up of quartz fibres, each as fine as a spider's web, the purpose of which is to discern and weigh the faintest traces of gas.

And we are purposed by the Lord to have an analogous endowment in the soul. A comparatively coarse conscience can register the sin of drunkenness, but it requires more exquisite feelers to discern a faint but deadly gas, a corrupting spirit, the

iniquity which can hide in an atmosphere. And yet it is in these aerial forms that sin is most commonly met. Days and weeks pass by and we may never meet it in the shape of some fierce and distinctive passion, but every hour it rides upon the wings of the wind. Only now and again do we meet our enemy as a roaring lion, but we continually meet him as "the prince of the power of the air." We may escape the lion, we cannot escape the atmosphere. To be able to discern the faintest trace of gas is one of the conditions of spiritual immunity.

Now we are never so much alert to bad air as when we have been breathing good air. If we come out of a crowded room, and fill our lungs with the fresh, clean air, and then return to the room, we are keenly sensitive to the poisoned atmosphere within. We must continually draw in breath in the fear of the Lord, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, if we would be able to discern the deadly gases of insidious worldliness. The soul must be constantly refreshed if she is to retain the freshness of her perceptions. It is only the soul that

knows God which has an instant recognition of the ungodly. Atmospheres reveal their secrets, and the noxious breath is dispersed before it has begun its destructive work.

LXI

WIND AND SAIL

"Let us go on unto perfection."—Heb. vi. 1.

Such is the Authorised Version of the Apostle's words. But a literal translation would be given in this phrase: "Let us be borne on unto perfection," and the difference is profoundly significant. The one leaves us too much in the nakedness of our own effort; the other introduces the friendly co-operative might of the eternal God. One leaves us faint in endeavour; the other inspires us with all-sufficient resource. One engages our attention to the oars; the other reminds us of a favourable wind. The one emphasises works, and the other emphasises grace. The latter calls us to put ourselves in certain preparatory conditions, and the great trade-winds of God will do the rest. We shall be "borne on unto perfection."

Now our religious life too frequently

dwells in the earlier version, and it is lacking in serenity and inspiration. Our religion becomes an extra piece of baggage which we have to carry instead of being an extra power to make our burden light. It weights us with impedimenta instead of endowing us with wings. We are in the atmosphere of commandments, and the beatitudes are ignored. We live in the severe house of the law when we might live in the radiant home of grace. Our statutes do not break into songs. We give more evidence of struggle than we do of new and glorious fellowship. We do not impress the world as though we had received strange and secret additions to our strength. We are not like a sailing boat which has just been caught in the sweep of a friendly wind and is being borne along joyfully to its desired haven.

And yet it is this evidence of a heavenly trade-wind which is our most arresting witness for the Lord. We are no good unless we manifest superior resource. If we are just as overdone as the children of the world, just as full of labour in hard rowing, just as easily exhausted, we offer

no recommendation for our faith. Our witness is to be found in the reality of a mystic current, in the breath of God, in the power of the Holy Spirit. We must make it plain to the world that there is more wind in our sails, more water in our mill-stream, more engine-power in our machinery. Our witness must be in "the demonstration of the power of the Spirit." And to this end we must lay hold of the passive as well as the active aspects of the Apostle's word; we must not only "go on," we must be "borne on unto perfection." We must be "strengthened in the grace which is in Christ Jesus."

LXII

THE PATTERN IN THE MOUNT

"See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."—HEB. viii. 5.

THAT is the secret of all progress. An ugly fact is seen in the light of its ideal, and the work of reform is begun. Some man has seen the pattern in the mount, and he brings the glowing rectitude and places it side by side with familiar realities, and he exposes their crookedness and fatal alienation. "Repent," he cries, and in obedience to his word and vision a revolution is born. It is when the pattern in the mount is lost, or when it has been forgotten, or when we have deliberately hid it away that we fall into an indolent contentment. When the shining, convicting pattern is missing we become "at ease in Zion," and foul and ugly things are undisturbed. Crooked happenings do not distress us. Nay, they appear as the quite natural and companionable furniture of

our lives. Wronged people do not arrest or alarm us because we do not see their angels as in the presence of our Father in heaven. We must see the heavenly pattern if we would see the earthly perversion of our Father's will.

If, therefore, we would have a period of wise revolution we must have a preparatory period of wise revelation. All healthy revolution in spirit and in circumstance, in character and in conduct, must begin in the glory of spiritual vision. "Where there is no vision the people perish." But where the vision is given and welcomed there will be the health of disquietude, and we shall begin to have the stirrings of a new day in movements of desire and will, and in the awaking energies of agitation and action.

And what is to be our pattern in the mount except the holy mind of Jesus Christ? If in all matters of right and wrong, matters of moral principle, we seek the mind of Christ, we shall surely have before us the pattern in the mount. What does Christ think about the poor? What does He think about their rights? What

is His pattern for holy dealing? And has He any pattern for marriage? And what is the ideal in glory concerning the purposed stature of every man? And what is His ideal as to the relation of races, the fellowship of all the tribes and peoples which jostle one another on the planet? And so with countless other questions which we might ask in the holy mount. We should find that the patterns would be given.

Sometimes the patterns are given to us with amazing brilliancy. Sometimes a pattern is made to blaze in the soul of some man or woman in lines of fire. It burns in the very texture of their being, and it kindles their awakened spirit into vehement speech and action. These are our prophets. They can say with Jeremiah—"There is in mine heart as it were a burning fire . . . and I cannot contain!" Their eyes have seen "the dawning of the glory of the Lord." They have received the pattern in the mount, and they dare not be disobedient to the heavenly vision. And that is the first necessity of our day, to seek the pattern in the mount.

LXIII

OUR VOICE AFTER DEATH

"He being dead yet speaketh."—Heb. xi. 4.

We go on speaking after we are dead. That is a very solemn thought. What will be the character of the voice with which we shall speak? What will our life continue to say in the lives and remembrances of others? The continuing voice has sometimes been described as the echo of the life and shares its character. But it is far other than that. An echo is only a weak and weakening continuance of the original voice, and it speedily passes into unobserved and unregistered silence. But death does not change life's voice into a fading echo. The life itself persists, vital and positive, radiating quickening or deadening influence. Death does not change character, and character never loses its contagion. We live on, and after death the influence of our life is what it was before. The

quality of the river is unchanged, whether its waters be clear and pure as crystal, or the vehicles of the most nauseous corruption. "He that is holy, let him be holy still; he that is unrighteous, let him be unrighteous still."

If, therefore, we would know with what kind of voice we shall continue to speak after death, we need only consider the character of our life. I do not mean our reputation. A man's reputation may seem to represent his influence, but it is by no means the main current of his life. Reputation is like an outer garment which we can frequently change; it may be changed a dozen times in the course of seventy years. But character is an inner garment, whose texture is woven by thought, and feeling, and desire, and action; and this garment is not exposed to the fickle whims of men or the caprice of circumstance. Happy the man who is clothed in the robe of righteousness and the garment of salvation! It is that inner self, our very self, with its own abiding purpose and devotion, which determines what happens in the way of continuance when death removes us

from our visible place among the children of men. "He being dead yet speaketh!"

All this is very solemn. And it would be overwhelming if we knew no way by which our lives may be made pure and harmonious, and, even now, able to radiate influences which will help to sweeten and inspire our fellow-men. But the secret has been unveiled to us, and we know the way. Our Saviour had His own wonderful figure of speech which no one else could employ. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." And from that infilling there results an overflowing. From that well there flows a river. "Out of him shall flow rivers of water," irrigating and fertilising the lives of others. Death does not dry up that living well, and therefore death does not dry up the river. The river flows from the living well, and therefor death does not stop the flowing! And s with the river of John, and of Paul! An so it will be with thy river and mine!

LXIV

GOD'S ENJOYMENT OF HIS CHILDREN

"He pleased God."—Heb. xi. 5.

We are in the habit of thinking, perhaps not unduly, but with a certain lack of proportion, on the joy which our Father gives to His children. There is a complementary relationship which we are apt to forget and which reveals our power to give pleasure to God. It seems incredible that we can do anything to God Almighty, and more especially that we can enrich the treasures of His joys. A false or imperfect reverence makes us subdue the presumptuous thought, and we put it under most vigilant suspicion. But if the relationship of father and child is anything more than a name, if it is something more than a verbal and formal expression, if it is really vital and intimate, it must be like a highway of spiritual commerce, and the precious merchandise must pass in both

directions. There must be the carriage from father to child, and there must be a corresponding transport of wealth from child to father. On this mystic ladder there are ascending and descending angels, and both are laden with their respective bounty. God's good grace can cover us with favour, and we can be well pleasing to God. If any one is in Christ Jesus, our Father will joyfully say to His child, "This is My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

Well, now, God wants us to be so great that He can enjoy us. He wants us to be companions in whom He can delight. He wants to find a large hospitality in the cheery openness of our characters. Has He given us any hints as to what kind of greatness makes us pleasing in His presence? I think He has, and it may be helpful to look at one or two. There was one day when our Lord seemed to be momentarily restraining the outpouring of His grace. A Syro-Phœnician woman was pleading for help, and the answer was delayed. But the woman's heart seemed to grow larger in entreaty, and she marshalled all her powers of love in the urgency of

her siege upon the heart of the Lord. And then the unwillingly hindered Fountain burst forth in streams of grace! "Oh, woman, great is thy faith!" That is one form of greatness which makes the children of men most pleasing companions to the Lord. Shall we dare to say that a great faith always gives the Lord the delight of surprise? "When Jesus saw his faith, He marvelled." That man was a fit companion for the enjoyment of God.

And here is another hint of the sort of folk who are so great that God can find pleasure in them. "Well done, good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Who cannot feel the warmth of God's enjoyment glowing in this gift of joy? And what had these people done? They had done little things in a great way. They had been great on small occasions. They had lived in obscurity with a lofty sort of life as though the eyes of multitudes had been fixed upon them. They had put an exquisite finish on work which was never intended for the public gaze.

They had been scrupulous about the scruples. They had finished the work which God had given them to do. And God rejoiced in them and called them into His joy as fit companions to sit with Him on His throne.

And other hints are given which I have not space to mention. There are people who are great in self-forgetfulness. "When saw we Thee an hungered and gave Thee meat?" How He rejoiced in the greatness of their companionship! But how is all this greatness to become ours? "No man by being anxious can add a cubit to his stature." No, but God can add a cubit to our stature. If we are only willing He will make us well-pleasing to Himself. He will make us kings and priests unto God. "Thy gentleness hath made me great."

LXV

THE GREAT VENTURES

"By faith Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went."—Heb. xi. 8.

This word embodies the very essence of faith. Faith is the embarkation on unknown seas. It is the action in faith which distinguishes it from mere opinion or even from riper conviction. Faith is more than a mental conclusion: it involves decision and movement. That is to say, it necessitates the co-operation of an active will. Faith is more than a verdict; it is the verdict carried out. It is here that many people fail to recognise the vital difference between a theological creed and a religious life, between a mental assent and a consent of the will, between belief and faith. The difference is something like the difference between the legislative and administrative functions in national government. In legislation laws are formulated, in administra-

tion they are carried out. Legislation is an abstraction, it is a matter of so many words. Administration takes the law into the common affairs of men, and determines their direction and destiny. Administration is law in action. Legislation is like a pattern, and it may be a very useless thing. Administration is the same pattern placed in the loom, governing all its movements, and determining all the threads in the finished fabric. And that is something like the difference between mere belief, in the sense of mental conclusion, and faith, which is belief mixing with life and controlling and colouring all its affairs. The vital element in faith is movement of the will, a venturing forth under the leadership of some great assumption, and experimenting with it on the wide, open seas of actual life. "He that *hath* My commandments and *keepeth* them." That is the combination which comprises a vital faith, and that is vital religion. In faith there is always the element of obedience; it is a great venture.

And so the real proofs in spiritual things can only be found in experience. We cannot find them in books, we meet them in

life. They are not handed to us by others, we discover them for ourselves. A man ventures forth at the bidding of the Lord, and as he goes along he begins to have "the evidence of things not seen." These things do not come to the door of the lounger, they join the pilgrim as he trudges along his way. The living light of assurance is not given to Sloth or Sluggard, it is given to Faithful, and Mr. Valiant-for-Truth, and Mr. Great-heart, who are on the road early and late. And so we have the Master's word: "He that believeth in Me shall not walk in darkness, he shall have the light of life." But note that this belief is walking, not merely talking; it is belief in process of movement, which is faith, and it is to this kind of valorous action that the light of life is promised. The vital proofs are given in experience. "It came to pass that *as he went* he received his sight." A man set out, at Christ's bidding, on a very strange journey, and some folk laughed at his simplicity as he groped along his way. But he found his eyes, and he found his sight, and he looked upon his Lord. And so we must not wait for our proofs, we

must go forth to meet them. In these regions, too, it is true that "faint heart never won fair lady." Here, too, it is all-ventured, all-won.

And thus it is that the Christian life, because it is a splendid venture, is also a bracing exploration and a magnificent discovery.

LXVI

PUTTING OUT ANTAGONISTIC FIRES

"Through faith . . . quench the violence of fire."
HEB. xi. 33, 34.

THE writer of these words is reviewing the exploits of faith. He looks back over the wonderful road of his nation's history, and the beacons of faith are so many and so resplendent they seem like a land of unbroken light. It is like as when one stands on the Calton hill of Edinburgh in the darkness and looks along Princes Street; the separated street-lamps appear to run together, and the radiance is continuous and unbroken. The men and women of faith make a cheerful history. The writer sees their shining triumphs everywhere. Faith makes conquests in every sort of circumstance, mastering them all, and compelling even the most hostile to pay tribute. Yes, faith has even quenched the violence of fire. In the fires of martyrdom the faithful in Christ

have conquered their pains. They have scarcely felt the flame. Cranmer bathed his hand in the fire as if he were bathing it in a mountain stream. He mastered it even while it destroyed him. His spirit dominated it, and stayed its violence at the frontiers of the soul. And this is the secret—we can only feel what reaches the central realm of consciousness. If we keep anything out of that inner realm we destroy its violence. And men like Cranmer have had their consciousness so filled with the Presence of the glory of the Lord that there was no room even for the aggressive pains of destructive flame. Look at Stephen while he was being stoned. We are permitted to look into his consciousness. "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of God." That infilling glory swallowed up the energies of his consciousness, and left no dribbling remnant to receive and entertain the pangs of death. By faith Stephen destroyed the violence of the stoning. The body-house was dissolving; the spiritual house was full of God.

But there are other fires whose violence can be quenched by robust and positive

faith. There is the fire of destructive passion. Faith in God can destroy its violence and can even quench the unclean flame. And faith does it in a very simple and effective way. The best way to put out a fire is to withdraw everything that is inflammable. And fires of a spiritual order resolve themselves into a question of fuel. Much fuel, much blaze; no fuel, no blaze. "Make no provision for the flesh to obey the lusts thereof." That is the remedy of an empty wood-house. Think of that word of our Lord. "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me." There was not a bit of fuel about on which the evil one could light an unclean fire. Not a bit of idle thought! No loose imagination! No illicit dream! Not a bit of wood about! And that is just what faith in Jesus does; it delivers us from inflammable stuff which gives the devil his chance. Life is "tidied up," and no fire can come nigh our dwelling.

And then there is the fire of destructive temper. It is a wonderful thing to see a fiery temper subdued by faith, and it has been done a million times. But let it be remembered that when God subdues this kind

of fire it does not mean that any executive forces in life are destroyed. The life that was like a lion is not changed into a sheep. The energy of life is not lost; it is only transformed. It is a conversion of forces, and what used to manifest itself in a violent temper now reveals itself in passion of a nobler kind. It is one thing to have a destructive fire breaking out in the parlour; it is quite another thing to have the same fire shut up in a stove in the basement, and distributing genial and healthy heat to every part of the house. The violent is transformed into the gentle, but the gentleness is just distributed violence, and none of the original power is lost. And this transformation is wrought by faith which relates us to Him who is the great Transformer, and who can purify and distribute the force of a bad temper, and change it into a fervent servant of the soul.

And what about the fire of destructive gossip? And how much there is about! And it is difficult to escape the flame. I saw a bungalow on fire the other day, an old-fashioned bungalow with a straw thatch. And when the thatch was blazing, handfuls

of burning straw were caught by the wind and whirled about the village, and everybody whose house had a thatched roof had all their work set to save it from destruction. And what is much gossip but blazing flimsy blown about by uncharted winds? What is it but the fiery darts of the evil one? Well, faith can meet its violence. The very detachment which faith gives to a life endows it with wonderful security. First of all, such a life dislikes the gossip, and it is a great preservative to have a healthy dislike. A splendid repulsion is a fine defence. A mean gossiper soon withdraws his flame if he encounters wet wood. And that is just what faith does. It gives a sort of wet-wood welcome to the fiery darts, and the sender finds no fun in the business. It was this wet-wood welcome which drove Satan away when he sought to allure the Lord. "And Satan departed from Him for a season, and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him."

LXVII

WITNESSES WHO GIVE EVIDENCE

"We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses."—HEB. xii. 1.

I CANNOT think that these witnesses are mere observers, silent lookers-on, watching the strenuous game which is being played by others. I cannot think they are like spectators at a gladiatorial show, gazing passively upon the combatants who are wrestling even unto blood in the arena below. I cannot think they are like the crowd who line the race-track and cheer the racers as they run. I think they are witnesses with a story. The witnesses have run on that very track, and they have won the garland and the palm. These witnesses are old racers, who made the course glorious with their contest, and who have left a record which is full of inspiration.

And therefore they are more than witnesses who can give applause, they are wit-

nesses who can give evidence. They can tell us how they ran the race, and how they won it. They can tell us how they trained for the race. They can tell us how they nourished and inspired their spirits. They can tell us how they maintained their strength, what kind of attire they wore, and what sort of shoes. That is the precious worth of these witnesses; they are not like old members of the House of Commons who have been elevated to the peerage, and who now come into the Commons and sit in the gallery, and look down silently on great conflicts which they are not permitted to share. These witnesses are more like veteran members of the House, ripe in exploit, and wisdom, and experience, whose every word is deed and history, and who offer their evidence on the floor of the House to the youthful members who are just beginning, who are uncertain about their equipment, and who are not familiar with the course. These are witnesses with a story, and they offer themselves in evidence.

Well, now, we are surrounded by these witnesses. The very air is thick with them. They are like a cloud in their multitude.

"We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses." And every one of them has a story, a story of grace, the miracle of Divine mercy as he found it on the road, and the story is full of encouragement for the runner of to-day. And what we have to do is to listen to them. "What experience have you had on the road? What secrets did you discover? What hidden manna did you gather? What brooks did you find by the way? What light of divine revelation broke upon your path? Above all, what did the Lord of the way say to you?" In this way let us question the witnesses, the bright throng in the Old Testament, and the still brighter throng in the New. And then let us turn to others in the vast multitude, and take their eagerly offered evidence. "The Lord's dealings with George Müller." Let that witness give his evidence. And what about the evidence of William Lockhart, the Liverpool merchant? And what about the evidence of Earl Cairns, and Genera Booth, and Francis Willard, and Ellice Hopkins, and Father Maturin, and Mr. Gladstone? What personal stories they have to tell of the grace and mercy of God!

And perhaps in this "great cloud of witnesses" there are your own father and mother, or some minister of Christ who was to you both herald and hero, both prophet and priest. Listen to their evidence. They have wonderful things to tell us about the way, and about the Lord of the way, and about the provision which He has made for those who are taking that road to the Celestial City, where the glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land. And they tell us of their stumblings and their fallings, and how they were recovered from their faults. They tell us how things looked at the beginning of the road, and how things looked towards the end. Above all, they tell us of their fellowship with the Lord, and how His Presence transformed the desert into a garden, and changed midnight into noon. All these are not silent witnesses, indifferent lookers-on. They have something to tell us, and they are eager to tell it. Let them give their evidence. "We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses."

"Witnesses of Jesu's merit, speak the word of power to me." That is the hungry cry of the world. Let us bring the wit-

nesses forward, and open the way for their story. Let their story be retold in our teaching and preaching, and so make it powerfully evidential. And to the testimony of others let us add our own. Let us join the cloud of witnesses, and let us tell our story. What has the Saviour done for us? What did He do with our sin? What was our experience in the banqueting room where we received our forgiveness? How have we found Him on different parts of the road where all earthly lights went out and we were left alone with Him? What has Christ Jesus been to us? Let us give the world our evidence. A bit of vital evidence is worth a ton of impersonal creed. "O what shall I do my Saviour to praise?" Do this; be a witness, and give your evidence. "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace."

LXVIII

THE LORD'S CHASTENING

"Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."
HEB. xii. 6.

"LOVETH . . . chasteneth." The association of the two words is everything. Unite them and there is light and hope; divorce them and there is darkness and death. To bring them together is to relate the vine-dresser's knife to the purple grapes; it lays the sharp-toothed harrow side by side with the blowing corn. To wed love to chastening is to put purpose into pain and to give direction to seemingly aimless grief. It sets a very tender and holy light upon the horizon, and the light throws its cheering beams far down the most desolate way. We are told much of what we want to know when it is said that chastening is not in the careless hands of brutal chance, but in the firm hands of the Lover who is revealed to us in Christ.

Well, then, there are some seemingly hard things in life which do not come from any hardness in God. There is a flame which is not kindled by anger but by love. It was the want of this assurance which burdened so many pilgrims who are seen on the Old Testament roads. They related the dark things in their experience to the displeasure of God. They interpreted their shadows as His frowns. Their sufferings were regarded as the strokes of divine revenge. Adversity was a proof of God's ill-favour. They looked upon disappointment as a witness that He had forsaken them. Now and again a man caught a glimpse of the inner truth about things, and it was amazing how it transformed his world. Here is one of them singing—"In the night His song shall be with me." That man is looking at things as they really are. He has caught a glimpse of the Lover in the blighted garden, and he is not afraid.

The purpose of God's chastening is not punitive but creative. He chastens "that we might be partakers of His holiness." The phrase "that we might be" has direction in it, and the direction points towards

a purified and beautiful life. The fire which is kindled is not a bonfire, blazing heedlessly and unguardedly, and consuming precious things; it is a refiner's fire, and the Refiner sits by it, and He is firmly and patiently and gently bringing holiness out of carelessness and stability out of weakness. God is always creating even when He is using the darker means of grace. He is producing the fruits and flowers of the spirit. His love is always in quest of lovely things.

Out of all this we may draw a very comforting conclusion; the absence of joy does not mean the absence of God. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." And yet there are many believers who, when the emotion of joy is not beating in the heart, interpret it as a sign of spiritual lapse and alienation. It is regarded as a severance of the fellowship of God. But the pruned vine does not suggest an absent vine-dresser, and even if the vine be bleeding it does not mean that he has gone away. And my emotions may change from sorrow to grief, but God remains faithful. My fickle moods do not mean a capricious Friend. Joy will be mine again,

and it will be all the richer and the deeper because of God's chastening. His chastenings are just His ministries for the deepening of the soul, for the increase of its receptiveness; He is seeking the enlargement of its capacity for the apprehension of Himself. The April showers bring the May flowers.

LXIX

ROAD-MAKERS

"Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way."—Heb. xii. 13.

Is there anything more wonderful than a well-made road, especially a road which hesitates at no eminence, but lays bonds upon it, and opens commerce and communion between distant places! I remember one such wonderful road climbing with a sort of easy laughter over the Maritime Alps. I remember another road which begins on the Dalmatian coast and subdues the fierce mountains which rise between the coast and Montenegro. But we need not go far away for wonderful roads. A noble road crossing some broad British moor is extraordinarily impressive; it stretches away like a narrowing piece of white ribbon and is lost on the horizon, where it suggests the unknown and the infinite.

Horace Bushnell had a fascinating inter-

est in roads. It would probably be true to say that next to his passion for theology it was his dominant passion. And he connected the two in his thought, and the one ministered to the other in the service of interpretation. He was always planning how roads should be made between this place and that place, or through a new piece of territory with which he had become acquainted. But he was something better than all this. He was a noble road-maker in thought and life. He was a pioneer in bold, firm, venturous thinking, and in any fearless way of living which his thought demanded. Any disciple of Bushnell knows what a great road-maker he was over perplexing and difficult ground.

But we are all road-makers. There may be no aim and purpose in it, and we may be unconscious of our work. Nevertheless, we are making roads. We cannot help it. Every step we take is the making of a track, even if it be only like an uncertain trail through a forest. But everybody goes the same way many times; acts become habits, and what was once a thin trail becomes a broad and open road. Yes, we are busy

road-making; every day and every hour we are at the work. What kinds of roads are we making? Is there anything impressive and majestic about them? Do they suggest dignity and strength? Are they straight or crooked? Can we describe them as fearless roads, going right ahead? Or are they wriggling and deceptive roads, stopping dead at the hill, or slinking away I know not where? Are we making rough roads, full of loose sharp flints, or smooth roads, where the stones have been gathered and every thorn removed? What sort of roads are we making?

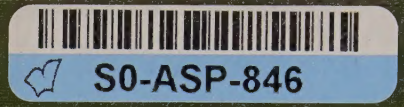
Why ask the question? Because somebody is following on, and will use our roads. And perhaps the one following on is lame, or only a poor walker, and the character of the road is of infinite concern. Lame, I say. Perhaps lame in will and purpose! Or lame in desire and self-control! Or lame in affection! And the lame one is perhaps your own son, and he is coming down your road! What about it? Is it all right? Is it safe for the son and the family? Is it safe for anybody and everybody else? Will they stumble on your road? Will they get

astray? Will they be pilgrims of the night, or pilgrims of the light? Do the roads lead into the darkness, or into the dawn? "Make straight paths for your feet;" somebody is just behind. Make them scrupulously straight, and put your best into them, "lest that which is lame be dislocated."

I was once walking with a good American through one of the streets of New York, which was in a terrible state of disrepair. "How is it?" I asked. And my friend replied: "The stuff that ought to be in that road is in the contractor's pocket." The corruption in character had worked itself out into the street. And so it is; the roads we make are no better than ourselves.

THE END

How we come to Rome


S0-ASP-846